New Statesman

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ERITREA

The forgotten war

PLUS: NGA and the Labour movement ● Reflections on the *Mirror* ● Ernest Bevin: working-class hero

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New Statesman

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Leukaemia is a form of cancer which affects the blood and, until twenty years ago, was usually fatal. After two decades of painstaking and dedicated work, doctors can now stem its progress in about nine out of ten cases. Fifteen years ago this little girl would certainly have died as a child. Now given the proper facilities, she has a real chance of being cured.

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New Statesman Vol 106 No 2754 30 December 1983

Risks of war

WHEN PRESIDENT REAGAN first sent US Marines into Beirut in July 1982, our Washington correspondent made the following comments: 'The electoral consequences for the Republicans of losing American lives in a Lebanon "quagmire" would be serious. . . . If the Marines begin taking casualties, they will find themselves bleeding on television and pounding away in retaliation at Beirut apartment buildings, just as the Israelis are presently doing . . . Reagan's decision to send troops to Beirut can provide no assurance to the Lebanese, the Syrians or the Palestinians that whatever promises the Americans have offered will be kept.'

That was 18 months ago. The US Marines are deeper than ever in the quagmire. Any pretence that they are acting in a 'peacekeeping' role has long been abandoned, for the United States is openly committed to the government side in the compound civil war in Lebanon. Over 240 Marines have died. And we are now entering a presidential election year. This last fact will dominate American policy towards the Lebanon (and all other trouble spots) until November. For under the American system the domestic requirements of election and re-election override everything.

That was why President Reagan stood up in public and, like some boy scout, accepted personal responsibility for the deaths of 241 US servicemen in the bombing of the Marine headquarters in October. The policy on which the Reagan Administration has been engaged in the Middle East for the past two years has been a dangerous disaster. From the moment when Washington actively connived in the Israeli invasion of Lebanon, it has been committed on the ground in the worst of all circumstances – without achieveable military, let alone political, objectives.

There are obviously circumstances where the use of force can help to achieve a political end. But to use force when there is no such end in view is the kind of military nightmare that any staff college graduate would know to avoid. The Marines' security in Beirut seems to have been extraordinarily casual. But the President's political instinct correctly told him that, if serving soldiers were court-martialled, American public opinion would think that they were being made scapegoats for what has essentially been a monumental error of political judgment. He judged that the best way to contain the potential damage to his re-election chances was to accept personal responsibility.

That, for the time being at least, takes care of the presentational aspect of one terrorist bombing. But it does not touch the question of what those running foreign policy for the Reagan White House propose to do about the Lebanon in 1984. The Reagan Middle East initiative will once again be promoted, but only in order to *appear* to have a policy. For the plain fact is that no plan will get anywhere, unless it is centred on some kind of Palestinian regime on the West Bank and in Gaza; and no Israeli government in prospect would ever think of slowing the present annexation of the West Bank except under unprecedented pressure from the US government; and no President is going to bring that kind of pressure to bear on Israel during an election year.

No doubt what the President's advisers would like best would be to 'do a Vietnam', that is to declare that the policy has been a success and pull out in time for the elections. But it looks most unlikely that the official Lebanese government forces would be up to holding even the areas surrounding Beirut on their own. Pulling out would be a transparent admission that the policy of the past two years has been bankrupt. The dangerous probability, therefore, is that US forces will continue to be an active party in a continuing Lebanese civil war during 1984.

THIS MAKES the Middle East the most likely flashpoint for a shooting war between the two super powers. Paradoxically, the point in Europe at which a US-dominated NATO actually meets a Soviet-dominated Warsaw Pact is the least likely such flashpoint. For ever since the Berlin blockade, the political and military conventions governing the behaviour of the respective sides have become very precise and very well understood.

Such conventionally established stability does not exist in the Middle East. With this American Administration there has been a complete breakdown of dialogue with the Soviet Union. Most critically, it must be assumed that the agreements reached in 1972 and 1973 on 'basic principles of US-Soviet relations' and on 'the prevention of nuclear war' no longer operate. Instead, both sides in a hostile and frightened frame of mind are trying to test the other's will. Such geopolitical poker could very easily slip into a shooting war, if there was a miscalculation about what the other side considered to be an essential interest. It would not be easy to contain such a shooting war once it started. Particularly since the issues involved would seem large, but the number of ground troops initially engaged would be small, the temptation on the 'losing' side to threaten to 'go nuclear' would be great. With even a threat to go nuclear, NATO and the Warsaw Pact would inevitably have to go to full alert.

An extra element of instability arises from the way in which the Reagan Administration is arbitrarily extending the list of issues which are considered 'essential to US national interests'. Grenada was a case in point, though not one likely to lead to a shooting war with the Russians. But the protection of the Lebanese government could very easily do so, as the Russians have already indicated that any US military action against Syria itself would be regarded as an act hostile to the Soviet Union. So, too, would be the US's insistence on reopening the Strait of Hormuz if Iran should block it. We are all at risk until there is a new Administration in Washington. □

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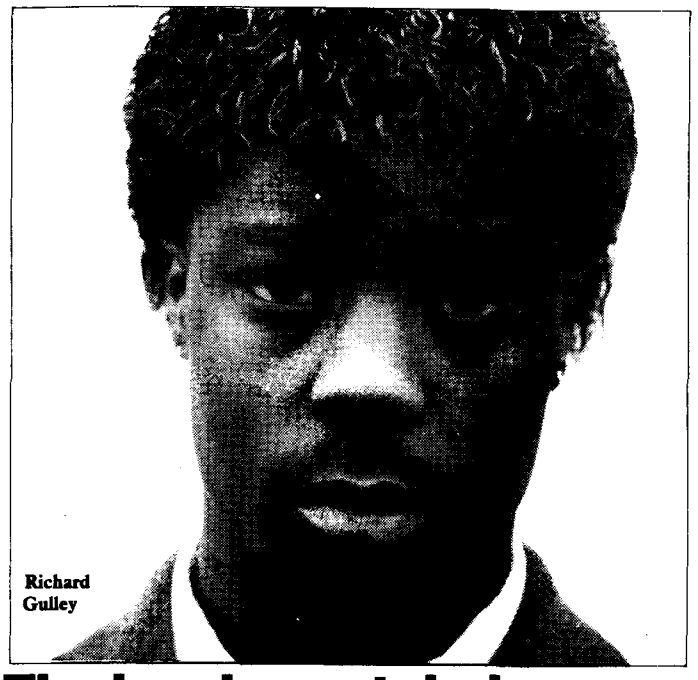

Richard Gulley

Andrew Ward/Report

The local constabulary and all the fun of the fair

IN MAY THIS YEAR, six policemen attacked a 17-year-old black boy at a funfair near his home in Putney. Richard Gulley, who once had ambitions of joining the police force, was acquitted of the charge of assaulting one of the policemen in August, because a freelance photographer had pictures of the incident. But the report on Gulley's complaint against the police, lodged the day after the attack, has not yet reached the Director of Public Prosecutions, eight months later.

On Saturday 7 May, Richard took his nine-year-old sister to the fair on Putney Common, along with a friend of his. As he stood playing a machine in an amusement arcade, two policemen came from behind, one putting him in an arm lock and another in a headlock. He was led out of the arcade and taken between two trailers, where there were another four policemen.

Richard says: 'They pushed my head in the mud, they were kicking and punching me. Then one pulled me up by the hair, and another kneed me in the groin.' He was taken to Wandsworth Police Station where he was told he had been arrested on suspicion of having a knife. He had no knife, and was then told he was being charged with assaulting one of the policemen, PC Beedell.

In the meantime his frightened sister and friend had run home, where Mrs Gulley was told what had happened at the fairground. She went there straightaway, and was told by one of the stall holders that her son had been attacked by the police for no apparent reason.

When Mrs Gulley saw Richard, she said: 'There was a lot of swelling on his cheekbones, his lip was split and his face was very puffy with dried blood on it. There was a massive lump on his forehead. He looked really awful and just started to cry.'

Richard was examined by a local GP, Dr Holmes, the following week, who noted his cuts and bruises, and a complaint was made by the Gulleys. But the case might still have been won by the police, had it not been for an extraordinary circumstance.

Mrs Gulley put an advertisement in the local paper asking for witnesses, and one came forward – Carlo Borgia, an accounts clerk and amateur photographer. Not only did he confirm the story that Richard had suffered an unprovoked attack, but he had two photographs. One of these shows Richard being stopped, and the other is a blurred picture of him on the ground with four or five policemen on top of him. The photos were produced in court, and the magistrate dismissed the case against Richard.

Borgia told the *NS*: 'I took a picture when Richard was actually pushed in the mud. But unfortunately I missed by seconds the moment when this group of policemen was actually setting on him. There were fists and knees flying all over the place.'

The police now have the photographs and won't release them because they are the 'property of the court'. Chief Inspector Williams, who is dealing with the Gulleys' complaint, said he had hoped to complete his investigation by the end of the year, but his report is now likely to go to the Director of Public Prosecutions some time in January.

In the months that followed the attack – when Richard was doing his O-levels – Mrs Gulley has been worried about her son, who is sometimes wary of going out. Richard has seen PC Beedell on the beat, close to his home. 'A week or two before the case he drove past me, and peeped his horn and waved. I couldn't believe it.'

Ironically he had talked with his mother of becoming a policeman himself, and the family emphasise that they hold nothing against the police force in general. But Richard said: 'When all this happened to me, I thought, I don't deserve this. What's going on?'

Justine Picardie

Labour just holds narrow lead

LABOUR has continued to hold a narrow lead over all other parties in local by-elections fought since Neil Kinnock was elected party leader. During this period it has had two brief set-backs – one at the end of October, when it lost two Islington seats to the SDP, and one at the beginning of December, when it lost two seats to the Conservatives. But the party has recovered both times to re-establish its position.

Overall, the distribution of votes between the main parties is much closer than that suggested by the opinion polls. Ninety-two elections have taken place since the beginning of October. Seventy-nine of these have been three-cornered contests, involving candidates from Labour, the Conservatives and the Liberal/SDP Alliance. In these contests, 166,031 votes have been cast, as follows:

Labour	55,997	33.7%
Conservative	54,907	33.1%
Alliance	52,173	31.4%
Others	2,954	1.8%

The closeness of the vote is not fully matched by the distribution of seats. In particular, the SDP appears to have fought few winnable seats (winning two out of 31 contests) compared with the Liberals (18 out of 58). The only two seats previously held by the SDP were both lost – one to Labour, one to Independent. The full gains-and-losses table is as follows:

	Seats defended	Seats lost	Seats gained	Seats held now
Con	37	8	7	36
Lab	33	7	6	32
Lib	11	3	10	18
SDP	2	2	3	3
Others	9	7	1	3

The table slightly overstates the strength of the Conservatives, as four of their seven gains have been from Independents in parts of the country where, in normal Parliamentary elections, the Tories are strong. Just one of Labour's six gains since October has been from Independents.

As often in the past the Liberals have gained more than any other party. Some readers have written to suggest that we play this fact down.

Council scoreboard

17 November

Shropshire CC	LAB GAIN (Ind)
Kincardine & Deeside DC	CON GAIN (Ind)
W. Midlands CC	Lab hold

1 December

Three Rivers DC	LIB GAIN (Con)
N. Yorkshire CC	LIB GAIN (Ind)
Falkirk DC	CON GAIN (Lab)
Cornwall CC	CON GAIN (Lab)
Dorset CC	CON GAIN (Lib)
Cornwall CC	Lab hold
Swansea DC	Lab hold
Lewisham LBC	Lab hold
Lewisham LBC	Con hold

8 December

Wansbeck DC	LAB GAIN (Lib)
Dacorum DC	CON GAIN (Ind)
Shepway DC	CON GAIN (Ind)
Wigan MBC	Lab hold
Northants CC	Lab hold
Northampton DC	Lab hold
Hammersmith LBC	Lab hold
Tyne & Wear CC	Lab hold
Kent CC	Con hold
Torfaen DC	Ind hold

15 December

Wolverhampton MBC	LIB GAIN (Con)
Kensington & Chelsea LBC	Lab hold
Wyre DC	Lab hold
Eastbourne DC	Lib hold
Runnymede DC	Con hold
Somerset CC	Con hold
Sedgemoor DC	Con hold
Milton Keynes DC	Con hold
Penwith DC	Ind hold

CC: County Council; DC: District Council; LBC: London Borough Council; MBC; Metropolitan Borough Council

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Indeed, if by-elections were the only evidence of public opinion that was available, Liberal performance would be highly noteworthy. However, when we compare by-election results (at Parliamentary as well as council level) with both opinion polls and the main elections – in May for councils, and general elections for Parliament – it becomes clear that the Liberals' performance judged by by-elections is consistently better than judged by any other yardstick. Why this is so – protest voting, the effectiveness of concentrated local campaigning, or whatever – is, of course, anther matter.

Peter Kellner

Home sweet Home Office

HARDIAL SINGH, the young Asian who spent nearly five months in prison while the Home Office dallied over arrangements to deport him (*NS* 9 December 1983), has been released as a result of an application by Bradford Law Centre for *habeas corpus* – a writ to state the reasons for detention.

The case has limited the Home Secretary's power to keep people awaiting deportation in prison indefinitely. From now on, they can only be detained for as long as is 'reasonably necessary' to arrange their departure; and the Home Office will have to act with 'all reasonable' speed to make the arrangements.

What the Home Office will not be able to do is drag its feet as it did in Mr Singh's case. Having told Singh in January 1983 that it was considering deporting him, the Home Office then left the passport arrangements in the hands of Durham police. It was not until October, with pressure from Singh's MP, that Whitehall woke up to the fact that negotiations between the police and the Indian High Commission were getting nowhere.

On 13 December, a High Court judge gave Home Office lawyers three days either to come up with a date for deportation or bring new evidence to justify further detention. They could produce neither, and on 15 December the Home Secretary had no choice but to authorise Mr Singh's release. He could have done it months ago.

Hardial Singh is now at liberty in Bradford on a restriction order – he has to register his address and report each week to the police. His lawyers were told unofficially that it could be 'many months' before he is deported. But for this court action, he would have spent them in prison at the taxpayer's expense.

Ros Franey

MISCELLANY

Christmas daze

Christmas began early this year for our favourite Fleet Street editor, Andrew 'Two Chauffeurs' Neil of the *Sunday Times*. When he heard that staff from his paper's picture desk were holding their annual Yuletide feast at a Greek restaurant near his office, he decided to pop in and offer them the compliments of the season. It was not to be: as he entered the restaurant he was greeted with howls of 'Out! Out! Out!' and was pelted with pitta bread and lemon slices by the disloyal lenspersons.

Two days later he and his senior editorial colleagues had their Christmas lunch at an expensive Italian joint in Islington. At the end of the meal a 'Strippogram' woman arrived and proceeded to disrobe (she was wearing a kilt, in honour of Neil's Scottish ancestry). 'Two Chauffeurs', we are told, 'thoroughly enjoyed' the woman's performance, as did his colleagues. We name the guilty lunchers: Brian MacArthur, the deputy editor (who had ordered the Strippogram); Godfrey 'Godders' Smith; Eric Jacobs; and James 'toady' Adams, assistant to the editor. The only person looking slightly embarrassed was the paper's political editor, Hugo Young.

Brian MacArthur photographed the scene. What is odd about MacArthur's enthusiastic participation in all this is that he is known to his neighbours in Highgate as a devout churchgoer.

Quid's in

Eight journalists from a London-based magazine went to a pricey nosherie called the Caprice for their Christmas lunch. The bill was just under £300. An executive on the magazine, David May, wrote an angry memo to the miscreants. They replied that May himself was quite a dab hand at running up three-figure lunch bills. An everyday story of media folk, you might think – except that it happened on that relic of the Alternative Society, *Time Out*.

Rest cure

David Steel sent a slightly bizarre Christmas message to the Young Liberals: 'I strongly recommend to you all the idea of a brief "sabbatical", if you get the chance, over the Christmas period.' Is this the first time in recorded history that the leader of a party has encouraged its youth wing to do no political work?

£££s to be won in your Soaraway Staggers!

Before 1983 is lost forever, let's see how much attention you've been paying. All the following questions can be answered with ease by anyone who has been faithfully reading this column all year, and a huge prize (i.e. a £15 book token) is on offer. Even if you can't answer them *all*, send in your entry anyway: if no one manages to provide a complete set of answers (unlikely, but who knows what effects an overdose of cranberry jelly can have?), the one with the most correct answers will take the loot. Send your entries to Miscellany, New Statesman, 14-16 Farringdon Lane, London EC1R 3AU, to arrive by 16 January. Good hunting.

1) Which senior British politician had a 'Node on the rising Uranus'?
2) Who is Sir John Lewis Jones, and how was his cover blown by Mrs Thatcher?
3) 'As a result of this analysis we conclude that our organisation is without useful function or purpose'. Who were 'we'?
4) 'We use money. We buy mailing lists. A very high official of FCS approached us under an assumed name. He identified himself eventually with his passport. We paid him a three figure sum. It was all in soiled banknotes.' Who said this?
5) Who bought the newspaper cuttings library from Sir James Goldsmith's defunct *Now!* magazine?
6) Which head of state was described as having had 'a well balanced education excelling in studies, sports, drama and elocution'?
7) Which cabinet minister has a son who was Lord's Taverner MCC Cricketer of the Year 1982?
8) A firm of market researchers called Gerry Levens & Co was hired to find whether the public thought that a certain product would be suitable for display in grocers' shops and supermarkets. What was

the product?
9) Which company won an £11½ million contract to build silos at Greenham Common and then said that it was 'not appropriate for directors to make judgments in the political field'? (A clue: the same company gave £13,000 to the Tory Party in 1981.)
10) At an auction in Aberdeen, a photograph of Mrs Thatcher was sold for £18. A photo of another politician raised just £2.75. Who was the politician?
11) Women for Life on Earth produced a badge representing 'the Mother Hen (BBC) in distress when the ducklings she has hatched take to water'. Who were the ducklings?
12) 'All sorts of people have been handing in their little pound notes. I think we're going to get an enormous amount of support.' Who said this?
13) Which MP is the descendant of a man who lost his job with the Ordnance in the 19th century because he supported the Tories rather than the Whigs?
14) Who cycled up to Checkpoint Charlie, only to be told that 'You can have a visa for yourself. You could have a visa for your car, if you had a car. But you can't have a visa for a bicycle'?
15) Who said the following? 'When James Baldwin was talking to me about the problem of being black, I said: "Unless you're born like me, red-haired, left-handed and a Roman Catholic, there's nothing you can tell me about prejudice." '
16) Who took Michael Foot to see *The Ploughman's Lunch*?
17) Which office of state has been held by Neville Chamberlain, Judith Hart and Shirley Williams, but was left vacant after the 1983 general election?
18) Which present MP was attacked as long ago as 1949 for spouting 'querulous claptrap'?
19) Which Thatcherite guru turned up at a London party wearing a sombrero and a safari suit, before going off to Central America?
20) 'I think politics suits a butterfly mind such as mine.' Who said it?
21) Who told us that 'I'm not telling you anything, you'd only get your left-wing hooligans to attack us'?
22) Who said that 'the Jews had no greater friend in the Third Reich than Adolf Hitler'?
23) 'We've unfortunately been reduced to trying to appeal to the types who read the *Sun* and the *Star*.' Who were 'we'?
24) Who went into the wrong office building on his first day in a new ministerial job?
25) Which former Moscow correspondent of the *New Statesman* said: 'I'm not going to operate on any story like this without a big budget'?
26) Which new Tory MP once proposed a motion at a school debating society, 'That This House Supports the Abolition of Private Education'?
27) Who told a *Woman's Hour* interviewer that he would like to hear the song 'Funiculi Funicula'?

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Doctors in new 'clash of interests' row

TWO DOCTORS on an East London health authority who voted to close a pair of hospitals could have had more private patients coming to them for treatment as a result.

Earlier this month Waltham Forest District Health Authority decided not to shut Jubilee and Forest hospitals, but consultant surgeons David Jeremiah and James Wellwood voted for closure.

Neither of them told their colleagues on the authority that the private Holly House hospital – situated within a mile of Forest hospital – could have gained private patients because of the closures. Nor did they say that as they both treat patients there, they themselves could profit from the run-down of the NHS.

David Jeremiah is already at the centre of a row – the Save Waltham Forest Health Services campaign is demanding his resignation from the authority after it was revealed that he applied to buy shares in the private hospital group Third Independent (*NS* 18 November). He didn't tell his health authority colleagues about that either. Wellwood has now revealed that he also applied to buy shares in Third Independent, but like Jeremiah is not going to invest in the company after all.

Holly House and Forest hospitals both do operations such as hip replacements. At the NHS hospital there is a four year waiting list, at Holly House a £2,800 charge, £800 of which goes to the surgeon.

The local Community Health Council is calling for a register of members' interests. Wellwood says he is 'very willing' for his private work to be disclosed. 'I don't think my patients at Holly House had any influence on how I vote,' he said. 'My principal interest is in the NHS.'

Jeremiah referred enquiries to his solicitor, who commented: 'The closure of Forest Hospital would not necessarily mean that there would be any extra work at Holly House. If a patient asks to go to Holly House, it is up to the patient where he would like to go. Mr Jeremiah has no financial interest whatsoever in Holly House. There is no matter that Mr Jeremiah has to disclose to the health authority regarding his work at Holly House.'

Peter Lang

More safety fears about Sizewell reactor

SENIOR NUCLEAR scientists still have fears about the safety of the pressurised water reactor (PWR), the type of nuclear power station planned for Sizewell. This is revealed by a report prepared for the Institution of Professional Civil Servants (IPCS) and leaked to the *New Statesman*.

The report was drawn up by the union's Nuclear Energy Working Party consisting of about ten scientists and professional engineers from the UK Atomic Energy Authority, British Nuclear Fuels Limited and the National Nuclear Corporation. The names of those involved has deliberately been kept secret by the IPCS in order to protect their positions. An IPCS sub-committee endorsed the report at a meeting on 15 December and it is now due to come before the union's National Executive Committee in mid-January. As we have previously reported (*NS* 9 December 1983) it is then likely to be published in spite of some opposition from pro-nuclear power hardliners.

The 10-page report, in the form of a submission to the government's Health and Safety Executive, says that the IPCS is not opposed 'in principle' to the introduction of PWRs into Britain. But it adds that the fact that this system is in widespread use in other countries 'does not mean that the system *per se* is acceptable' as a safe source of power. Problems encountered in the United States, France and Canada 'have highlighted weaknesses and have inevitably affected public confidence in the system'.

The report's conclusions will not make life easy for the PWR's main backers, the Central Electricity Generating Board (CEGB):

- 'Economic or commercial considerations must never be allowed to override safety.' In the argument between the National Nuclear Corporation and the Nuclear Installations Inspectorate (NII) over the cost of introducing measures to minimise the risk of workers' exposure to excess radioactivity, safety must be 'paramount'.
- 'The failure rate of the steam generating units remains a problem for which no satisfactory solution has so far been demonstrated.' The CEGB's claim to have solved the problem is unproven.
- The analysis used to estimate the likelihood of failure of the reactor pressure vessel 'remains to be publicly confirmed as a sound basis for determining pressure vessel integrity'. Differences of opinion should be sorted out by letting independent experts see technical background papers.
- There are 'serious limitations' in the models used to predict the movement of water and steam under accident conditions and major unresolved problems associated with the ballooning of fuel cladding.
- Commercially confidential information on fuel manufacture should be made available to the NII.
- As PWRs are 'intrinsically more difficult to control under fault conditions than AGRs (advanced gas-cooled reactors)', very high standards of operator training and new equipment are necessary.

As the last point suggests, the report really represents the re-emergence of the industry's AGR lobby, anxious to argue the benefits of the British design as against the American-style PWR. It can be read as an attempt to kill the PWR by insisting on safety standards that would render the system uneconomic. There is no doubt that it will provide valuable ammunition for objectors at the Sizewell public inquiry where safety is due to be considered in depth in the new year.

Rob Edwards

Racist school texts to be countered

PUBLISHER Thomas Nelson has agreed to circulate schools with a critique of its own geography texts which it admits are 'unintentionally racist'. The publications, bought by half of Britain's schools, have been used to teach a million secondary school students over the past 10 years.

Three worksheets are causing particular concern:

- *South Africa* gives the impressions that blacks working in Johannesburg are all immigrants – not South Africans. This text is based on a publication produced by the South African embassy in London.
- *Workers on the Move* says that many immigrants entered Europe 'without work permits and accepted low pay and bad housing conditions in the hope of not being discovered by the authorities'. Next to this is a large photograph of an Asian family shopping in Southall.
- *Dallas: Dream City* claims that its wealthy lifestyle is spoiled by three problems which are 'due to a lack of planning and control'. Dallas is a 'visual mess', its crime rate is a 'disgrace', and '19 per cent of the population is negro and econimically deprived'.

The texts, which are still on sale, were first published in 1974. They were commissioned by the government-funded Schools Council and are used in the Geography for the Young School Leaver course.

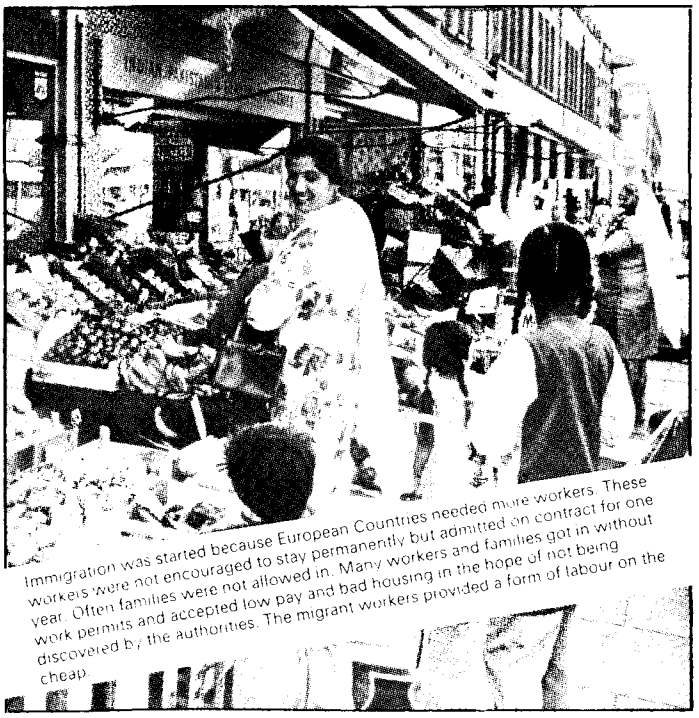
Criticism of the material has been led by the Association for Curriculum Development in Geography, a group of radical teachers. Nelsons has agreed to publish a newsletter for teachers to help them deal with these sections, to be drafted in consultation with the Association for Curriculum Development.

Dawn Gill, an Inner London Education Authority adviser who has been among Nelsons' strongest critics, welcomed the publisher's offer. She says that Nelsons has now 'set the pace for other publishers in dealing with racist school material'.

Nelsons' final decision to publish the critique will depend on its content, but Schools Council spokesman Tony French says that in the 'unlikely event' that Nelsons refuses to publish, the critique would be circulated directly by the Schools Council.

Martin Bailey

Image of Asian family in Southall, with the juxtaposed text (from *Workers on the Move* worksheet)


Immigration was started because European Countries needed more workers. These workers were not encouraged to stay permanently but admitted on contract for one year. Often families were not allowed in. Many workers and families got in without work permits and accepted low pay and bad housing in the hope of not being discovered by the authorities. The migrant workers provided a form of labour on the cheap

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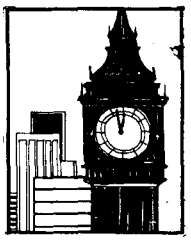

PETER KELLNER, Political Editor

And the second prize: *two* weeks in Strasbourg

LET US START 1984 as we should like to go on, even if we find in time that we can't. Despite the mauling Labour received last June, the party now looks to be in better fettle than for some years. Its opinion poll rating is higher than at any time since mid-1981, when the SDP first took off. Neil Kinnock is a popular leader who looks hungry for power. (I regard that as an asset, although others may disagree.) For three months now the party has given a plausible impression of unity. We can enter the New Year with an unaccustomed if modest feeling of optimism.

Will it last? In his early weeks as leader, Kinnock has been too windy at Question Time in the Commons; apart from that, he has done well enough – in speeches, on radio and TV, and in his handling of the shadow cabinet and national executive – to buy himself more time to tackle Labour's more deep-seated problems. These include, in no particular order, the maintenance of unity beyond his honeymoon period, the final extermination of the Liberal/SDP Alliance as an effective alternative to the Conservatives, revision of vote-losing policies and reorganisation of the party's headquarters organisation at Walworth Road.

Labour's capacity to tackle each of these challenges will be tested in the elections to the European Parliament next June. It is because the outcome of that election will tell us a lot about the future map of British politics that it is important, rather than for any particular effect the distribution of votes will have on the future of Europe. Above all, Labour needs to campaign with sufficient effect to obliterate the Alliance. That will happen anyway in terms of seats (the Alliance will do well to win more than one or two of the 78 Euroseats in Great Britain, while Labour will do badly to win fewer than 20); the more decisive issue will be the distribution of the popular vote. Labour must erase the image of last June, when fewer than 700,000 votes separated Labour and the Alliance.

(A brief digression. We have encountered not a little hostility since we suggested during the general election that in some seats tactical anti-Tory votes should be cast for Liberals who had a chance of winning. The strategic object, forlorn as it transpired, was to prevent an outright Tory victory. No such strategic objective exists next June. Bluntly, votes will matter more than seats. *There is no tactical case this time for Labour supporters voting Liberal anywhere.* As Liberals are a decent, fairminded lot, we trust they will give this statement the same prominence as they gave our recommendation last June.)

Before Kinnock's election as party leader, Labour's objective for next June was simply to come second to the Conservatives: *any* lead over the Alliance would be regarded as a moral victory. But since early October the party has raised its sights. Every opinion poll for almost three months now has put Labour 15 to 20 points ahead of the Alliance. The aim now is to repeat this in a real election.

That may not be easy. The last Euro-election was held on 7 June 1979, just five weeks after Mrs Thatcher entered Downing Street. At the same time Gallup was conducting one of its regular monthly opinion polls, asking respondents how they would vote in a general election. These are the two sets of figures:

	Euro-election	Gallup poll
Conservative	51%	42%
Labour	33%	43½%
Liberal	13%	12%

It would be hard to imagine a more different set of figures: an 18 point Tory lead in the Euro-poll, but a 1½ point Labour lead in the Gallup poll. Even allowing for some sampling error by Gallup, a large gap still needs to be explained.

ONE DECISIVE point about the Euro-election in 1979 was the bad turnout – just 32 per cent. Labour had just lost the general election; there was little campaigning and less popular enthusiasm for the Euro-poll; Labour was widely perceived a less 'European' party than the Tories or the Liberals. If we assume that, for every three Tory supporters who stayed away from the polling stations, four Labour supporters also stayed away, the difference between the Gallup figures and the election result is completely explained.

This time, it is argued, Labour will not face the same handicap. Unlike 1979, we are told, the party will campaign enthusiastically. Labour supporters will have recovered from their post-election-defeat hangover and will flock to the booths to demonstrate their loyalty.

We can but hope. Any realistic assessment of Labour's chances must, however, face the prospect that once again Labour may under-perform, though probably less dramatically than in 1979. For one thing, it will still be hard to persuade voters that it matters to them who their new Euro-MP should be. In essence, the European Parliament has just three weapons. The first two have the flexibility of a nuclear bomb; the third has the power of a pea-shooter.

The three powers are: to reject the annual Common Market budget; to sack the EEC commissioners; and to comment on proposed EEC legislation. To exercise the first two powers a two-thirds majority of those present and voting is required. There are various subsidiary powers – like the procedure used earlier this month to delay Britain's budget rebate – but when they are all added together it would still be hard to argue that a European Parliament composed of even the most notable, talented, resourceful and determined members could act as either a substantial force for good, or an effective bulwark against stupidity. If we are looking for some reason to persuade electors to use their votes next June, we are unlikely to find it in the intrinsic importance of the Parliament those votes will elect.

In addition, Labour has a particular problem. As a spasmodically anti-EEC party it has acquired the support of some people who have no wish to see any European Parliament of any kind elected. The higher the turnout, they argue, the greater the Parliament's legitimacy: better to abstain. My impression is that this argument will be heard less in 1984 than in 1979; but it still has to be overcome.

Finally, and most seriously, there is Labour's policy itself. Last June the party's manifesto stated:

> British withdrawal from the Community is the right policy for Britain – to be completed well within the lifetime of the parliament. That is our commitment.

Since then, Labour's annual conference has adopted a National Executive policy statement describing withdrawal as 'an option' rather than a commitment. Officially the word is that withdrawal is no longer an issue inside the party, since there will not be a Labour government until at least 1987 and, by then, who knows what state the Common Market will be in?

Clearly Kinnock and his European spokesman, Robin Cook, hope that this form of words will satisfy both pro- and anti-marketeers. But the same approach to political architecture – designing a policy to defer a conflict between two fundamentally opposed viewpoints – was applied to the issue of Polaris at this year's general election. It collapsed under the strain.

Early in the New Year – it would be too late to wait until the campaign proper gets underway – Kinnock and Cook will need to state unambiguously that Labour *has* changed its policy; they will need to spell out just what it has changed to; and they will need to persuade both pro- and anti-marketeers to accept it. They may well find it hard; but if they wanted an easy life, they should never have entered politics in the first place. □

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Shooting the Messenger

John Lloyd analyses the significance of the NGA dispute at the *Stockport Messenger* for the labour movement, and evaluates Len Murray's role

IN THREE HECTIC days – from 12 to 14 December – the *Stockport Messenger* group dispute reached a kind of untidy climax for the labour movement. The National Graphical Association had tried by mass picketing to stop the distribution of a giveaway newspaper owned by Mr Eddie Shah. The TUC's Employment Policy and Organisation Committee (Epoc) voted by 9 to 7 to 'take a sympathetic and supportive view'. Len Murray, the TUC general secretary, fought that decision in public and the next TUC general council meeting reversed it by 29 to 21. The NGA then called off the strike, citing Murray's 'divisive' actions and claiming that it had been 'sold down the river' by the TUC. Victory seemed to belong to Mr Shah.

The episode was of the highest importance to the labour movement, and it is therefore imperative it does not misread it. The most obvious point, clear throughout the dispute, was that the NGA was fighting on bad terrain. Shah could not convincingly be represented as an anti-union demagogue (though it is clear he became increasingly hostile to the NGA) and his own workers, as far as could be independently ascertained, did not wish to enter a closed shop (though the union claimed they had been recruited for their anti-union prejudices).

The 'free' newspaper industry in which Shah has become rich is booming hugely: some 530 titles are now gulping up circulation all over the country, pushing established, paid-for newspapers up against the wall and employing the newest technology with the slimmest of staffing. A few have quietly evaded unionisation already: Shah was unlucky in meeting a stubborn local NGA official who insisted on the closed shop he had already established in his original, Stockport plant being maintained when he expanded to Bury and Warrington.

The wholly unionised, paid-for provincial newspapers, too, are automating as fast as they think they can. They mounted, with good timing, a display of computerised technology in Brighton in early December, as part of their 'Breakthrough 84' initiative to bring super-efficient printing to the provincial press next year. A few groups – such as the Wolverhampton *Express and Star* and the Portsmouth and Sunderland Newspapers – have systems in place which can be worked by journalists and managements. Had the NGA struck on 14 December, they were prepared to print without printers – and their printers might have defied the strike call to stop them demonstrating their ability to do so.

Furthermore, the NGA's reliance on the closed shop as its basic organising unit, and on secondary action to enforce closed shops, means that it is uniquely vulnerable both to current legislation and to changing technology and attitudes. The 1980 and 1982 Employment Acts discourage the closed shop and prohibit secondary action to achieve them. At the same time, the new typesetting equipment chops away the need for a five-year apprenticeship and renders economically absurd the huge wage differentials between the keyboard work of a young woman secretary and the keyboard work of a middle-aged male printer.

The closed shop in the printing industry is seen *by other workers* as the obvious maintenance of a privilege, like the even more tightly closed shops of the law, medicine and finance. As soon-to-be-published research on the closed shop by Professor John Gennard and Steve Dunn will show, it has declined in UK industry rapidly in the current recession, and will be under further sustained attack from the law, a shift in managerial attitudes and workers' apathy or even hostility.

For the NGA the closed shop must be defended as a *national* principle, or it soon falls. The union has been able to live with a few quiet exceptions and put ring fences round the two anti-union companies of D. C. Thomson in Dundee and T. Bailey Forman in Nottingham. But it cannot support many more public defeats like that at the *Stockport Messenger*.

THE ISSUE has, however, been correctly seen as more momentous for its wider impact on the labour movement as a whole. It is too early to say, for example, how deep is the rift in the General Council and what will flow from it – but some lines of change can be isolated for comment.

The dispute became the property of the TUC for two reasons: the NGA could not win on its own, and the special Wembley TUC Conference decisions of April 1982 gave it the forum in which to seek support. Wembley was held at the nadir of government-TUC relations: the strategy adopted was one which allied a studied disdain for the new Acts – 'business as usual' – where the Council thought the ground good for a fight. Much of the bitterness since the General Council's 29-21 vote has been between those who assumed – or wished to assume – that Wembley more or less *guaranteed* support and those who, like Murray, laid stress on the *conditionality* of support. (Some at least of those who opposed Murray – most obviously Clive Jenkins of the white collar union ASTMS – did so not because they wished to defy the law but because they believed the Epoc's position remained *within* the law. Here, the differences appear to be tactical, even behavioural, rather than strategic.)

Once the dispute *had* become the property of the TUC, it was at the mercy of the balance of forces on the General Council. That is commonly understood to be centre-right (though support for Murray's line was not automatic and could have failed to carry the day, forcing his resignation). The centre-right was the architect of the new strategy of reluctant accommodation to political reality, which Murray expounded at the TUC Congress. By throwing its fight over to the TUC, therefore, the NGA was asking for militant support from a body dominated by those who had decided against such tactics – barring an extraordinary exception. (The surprising events were the aberrant Epoc vote and the cliffhanging nature of the general council's majority.)

The episode has been variously seen as strengthening or weakening the position of Murray. His display of courage is unquestionable: but some among his supporters say that he was unwise, that he could have repudiated the Epoc decision more subtly and avoided the split. Yet few thought the split could be *indefinitely* postponed: the hopes of the Left for an industrial putsch to render the Acts unworkable were irreconcilable, when put to the test, with the revisionist belief in a slow, lawful haul back to power (or at least away from powerlessness).

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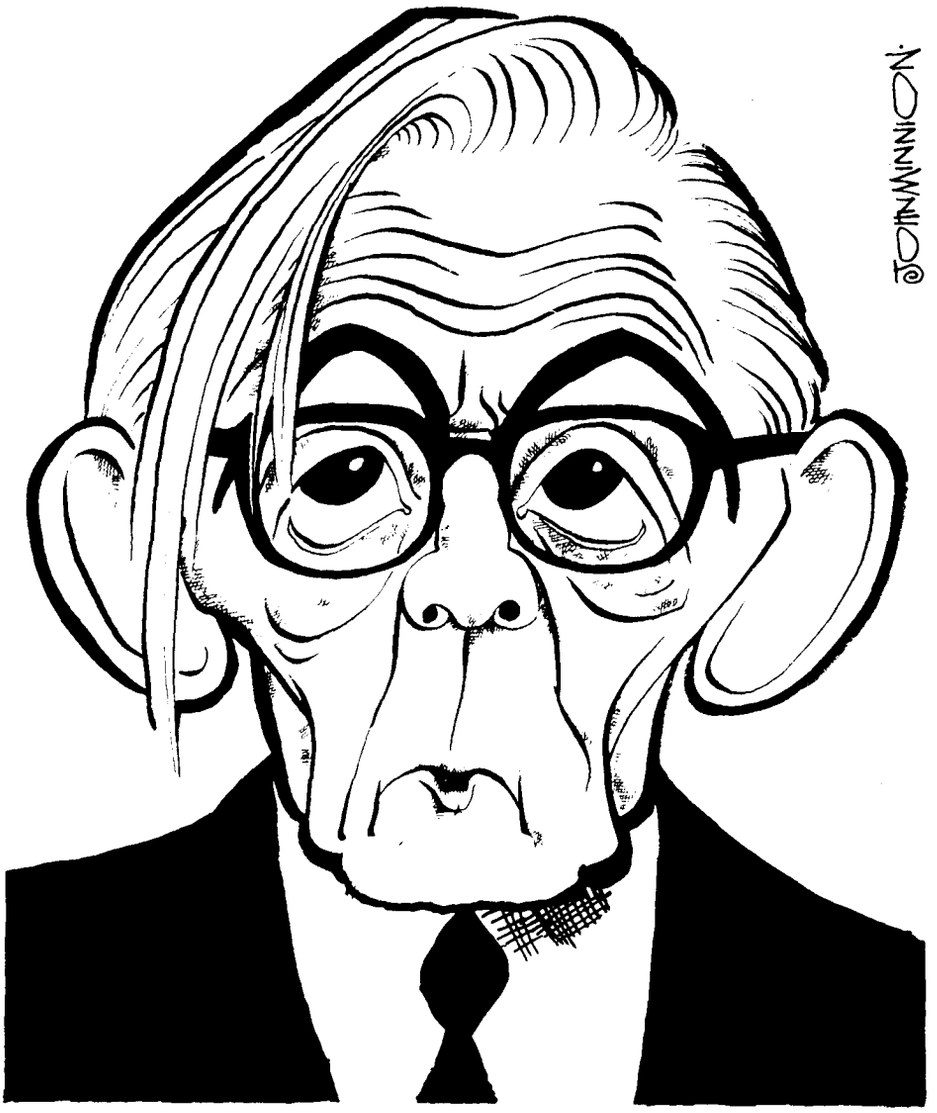

Murray's decision and actions reflect his conviction that the second course was the only one to follow and his determination to lead the movement from the front into a mature realisation of all the consequences and responsibilities flowing from such a long haul. If he can win some success with this strategy in gaining concessions from the government – and he has put himself in a better position to do so – he may be seen, in retrospect, as having achieved a measure of greatness as general secretary. If he cannot, he will be harshly judged, not just by the Left (which does so already), but by those presently following him in doubt.

The problem common to all the union leaders, illuminated by these events, is the depth of the support they can muster. Some financial support, in the shape of the TUC's campaign and defence fund, (around £750,000) can and has been offered. Beyond that, the *industrial* support, which the NGA made it clear it would have demanded, was much more questionable. The exhausting and often rancorous debates in Epoc and the Council over industrial action could be seen as the quarrels of generals unlikely to have armies – some knew it, and some did not.

It can never be known what kind of solidarity action might have been mounted. We do know, however, that the Warrington picket of 29/30 November, at 4,500, was the most which was mustered, and that the Warrington demonstration of 14 December was around 2,000 strong, between one fifth and one tenth of the totals forecast by the organisers. The NGA dispute was often compared to the various actions in 1972 which tested, and ultimately broke, the Industrial Relations Act and the Heath Government: the difference was the participation of the workers – high a decade ago, largely absent now.

Murray's calculations had to embrace these elements. In the game he plays, he needs to impress government, industrial and public opinion that the union movement is hooked on to reformism and rational agreement and that its dislike of the employment laws has roots deeper than union officialdom or the activist layer – a point still to be proven. Most of all, he and his colleagues need to win back the active assent of workers for whom unionism is in danger of becoming remote or even hostile. To recognise that none of these aims would be advanced by mobilising what support he could to rub out Eddie Shah was – as far as the labour movement's future is concerned – both courageous and wise. □

John Lloyd is Industrial Editor of the Financial Times.

PRESS

Mirror Mirror up for sale

Bob Woffinden assesses the chances for Labour's remaining Fleet Street ally now that its shares are going to be offered to the public

EARLY IN 1984 Mirror Group Newspapers (MGN) will be cut loose from its present owners, Reed International, and floated off into the uncertain seas of independence – its shares will be offered for public sale. The company comprises six titles – the *Daily Mirror, Sunday Mirror, Sunday People, Daily Record, Sunday Mail* and *Sporting Life* – including the only national newspaper to back the Labour Party through thick and thin.

But a paper's political complexion can alter completely with a change of ownership; witness how quickly the *Daily Herald/Sun* (a traditional Labour daily) became a source of support to the Conservative Party when Rupert Murdoch acquired control. MGN, and particularly the *Mirror* (with its 3 million plus circulation) is a highly attractive property – the Left, already short of national press support, could lose its last strong Fleet Street ally. Already there are rumours – perhaps mischievous – that Sir James Goldsmith, who has long sought a place at the Fleet Street table, is angling for a stake in the *Mirror*.

Would it actually matter if the loyalty of the *Mirror* was lost to the Labour Party? After all, the paper has already been tarred so thickly with the brush of *Sun*-style journalism that it can seem an ally of doubtful value. Those, like Tony Benn, who disparage the media and all their works, don't these days pause to exempt the *Mirror* from their blanket strictures.

A generation ago, it was all so different. The '50s and '60s were a halcyon period of minimal competition between the popular papers. The *Mail* and *Express* were then broadsheets of a more serious purpose and the *Mirror*'s only rival in the tabloid market was the perennially ailing *Daily Sketch*. 'Consequently we were able to take risks with the circulation,' recalled Sydney (now Lord) Jacobson, political editor of the *Mirror* during that period. 'That meant, in advertising terms, taking the paper upmarket; in editorial terms, improving it.' The *Mirror* added a more generous dash of politics to its honest entertainment and still held a circulation of over 5 million.

In November 1969 Hugh Cudlipp, chair-

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man of IPC, the publishing empire built around the popular success of the *Mirror*, sold off the *Sun*. Until 1960 the TUC had held a large stake in the paper; by 1969 it was considered so hopelessly lame that its purchaser, Rupert Murdoch, acquired it for next to nothing.

The sale coincided with a period of comparative sophistication for the *Mirror* (a colour magazine had been launched in 1968), which had thus left a gap which the *Sun* was able to exploit with devastating ruthlessness. (In welcoming the new-look paper for BBC1's *24 Hours*, William Rushton commented, 'The *Sun* has risen today under the auspice of Rupert Murdoch – and a right load of 'orse-piss it is too.') By the early '70s the *Sun* was biting chunks out of the *Mirror*'s circulation. 'The *Mirror* had to lower its editorial sights to compete,' remarked Jacobson, 'it was simply inevitable.' Serious writers on the staff found their quotas of column inches increasingly curtailed, as the paper's dependence on the staples of mass-market news (sex, crime, royalty and animals) increased.

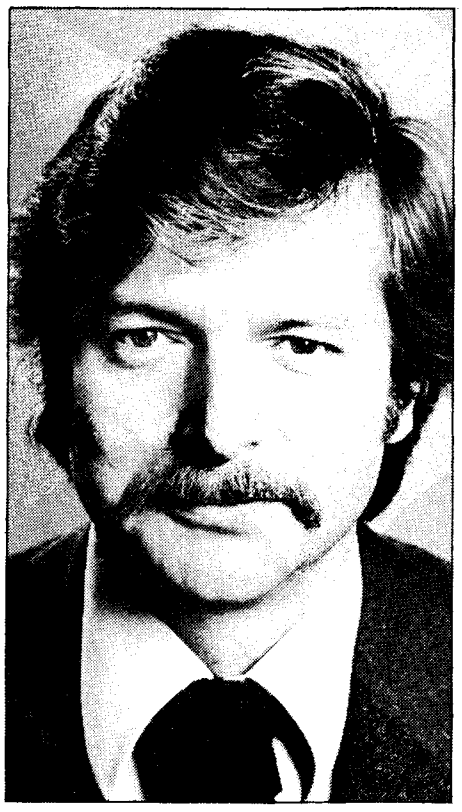
By 1981 the *Mirror* was showing signs of regaining lost circulation ground. Murdoch retaliated with the old one-two: dropping the cover price of the *Sun* to a penny below that of the *Mirror;* and introducing bingo. The *Sun* put on 500,000 almost overnight and today holds a healthy lead over its main rival of roughly 4.2 as against 3.3 million copies daily.

AS THE ETHICAL and journalistic standards of Fleet Street slip further year by year, the *Mirror*'s policy seems to have been to swallow hard and plunge deeper itself. 'What was intolerable five years ago,' admits one senior staff journalist, 'is acceptable today.'

The *Mirror*'s principal attributes are immediately apparent. It still has some widely respected 'name' journalists – like Paul Foot, John Pilger and Keith Waterhouse – and it carries some trenchant leaders contributed by Joe Haines. Beyond that, there are two elements which its staff cite in the paper's defence – its broad political and social thrust; and the fact that its stories, at least, are true.

This last is indicative of the extent of today's Fleet Street malaise. Alas, though, even this is less true than it was. The *Mirror* has lately carried a wholly fictitious front-page story about the Princess of Wales (for which it duly apologised). Two of Fleet Street's famous fabrications of recent weeks – the girl-of-ten-on-pill and Prince Edward-banned-from-pub stories – have been as faithfully reported in the *Mirror* as in its competitors. However much one sympathises with the paper's social and political concerns, the problem is that they are a mere veneer. Its underlying news values have been tarnished by the fierce competitive pressures; they are now ultimately dictated by the *Sun*. 'The most utter tripe commands a vast readership,' confesses a leading journalist. 'It would surprise anyone with remotely radical views.'

As the full force of H. L. Mencken's timeless quote – 'No one ever lost money



Mike Molloy: editor of a 'highly attractive property'

underestimating public taste' – has been felt in Fleet Street, so staff morale at the *Mirror* has wilted. The paper has been caught in a classic dilemma: it has been trying to fight a dirty war with a clean conscience. In the process, it has compromised its principles without backing off them sufficiently to win any battles. Is this the kind of paper the Labour Party should be keen to preserve? The answer is a qualified yes. There is, still, a basic decency about the *Mirror* which is not evident anywhere else in the tabloid press. (For example, Paul Foot describes the decision to run his column at all as 'altruistic'.)

Reed, of course, is selling MGN purely for financial reasons. Company chairman Sir Alex Jarratt has timed the move adroitly – it will precede the public flotation of Reuters, the news agency, which has rocketed in value over the past decade thanks to its financial information services. Fleet Street proprietors are anticipating a windfall from this; MGN's 7.8 per cent stake in Reuters could be worth £80 million.

CLIVE THORNTON, former chief executive of the Abbey National building society, is the new chairman-designate of MGN. He has been recruited because of the lack of City experience on the existing MGN board. He will oversee the sale and help to ensure that the paper retains its independence and character. The appointment has been greeted with wide approval. John Pilger describes Thornton as 'an inspired choice. He's a tough and clever man.' Reed has thus negotiated with aplomb the first problem arising from the sale. Two obstacles remain. The first is that the flotation of Reuters is itself highly controversial. The news agency's 'editorial integrity' is supposed to be guaranteed by a trust. There could yet be legal challenges from trustees to try to block the sale, or to attach conditions. If this happens, MGN's worth in the market might be accordingly reduced.

Provisions formally protecting the future editorial independence of the *Mirror* could easily be written into the conditions of sale and they might be more genuinely effective than those entered into by Rupert Murdoch, when he took over Times Newspapers. However, the more conditions that Reed attaches to the future of the *Mirror*, the less prospective buyers will be attracted to bid for shares – and, hence, the less Reed could expect to recoup from the sale. Reed, therefore, is keen to incorporate relatively relaxed conditions into the sale, while the *Mirror*'s present staff, and the NUJ, want to include strict conditions. Thornton is at present mediating between these two opposing standpoints.

Although Reed is going to try to ensure a wide distribution of MGN shares, so that no one figure will dominate the group, it will not take the extreme step of selling off only non-voting stock (which is, not surprisingly, less attractive to investors) and retaining the voting shares in trust. So in the final analysis, ownership will be ownership. 'You cannot give a guarantee of editorial independence,' says Mike Molloy, editor of the *Mirror*. 'It sounds fine and noble, but it's impractical. A newspaper is a business, and for somebody deliberately to drive it on to the rocks for some ideology which they believe is the absolute truth is nonsense; and it would be reckless of the people who ultimately control the paper to allow them to do it.'

The best way to ensure the continued editorial integrity of the *Mirror* is, simply, to make it more worthy of preservation. This is something which Thornton, with his energy, iconoclasm and freshness of approach, could achieve. The *Mirror* did win brownie points a few years back by opting out of the 'Page 3' syndrome. It was a positive decision which boosted staff morale without damaging circulation. There has, however, been much backsliding since. Can the concepts of 'popular' and 'serious' be successfully reconciled? Is it possible to run a mass circulation newspaper that combines sound editorial principles with a left-of-centre political philosophy? There are many in Fleet Street, infected with the grubby fatalism induced by the *Sun*, who think not; but there are others who believe it to be possible.

This is the real challenge. The rehabilitation of the *Mirror* is of far more importance to the Left than far-fetched proposals to launch a trade union-backed national newspaper. It is far more essential to restore journalistic propriety to Fleet Street than to redress the balance of party power. Newspapers must return to the job in hand – of reporting the news, rather than concealing or inventing it. It needs positive thinking – exactly what Thornton could provide – to restore pride, self-belief and commitment to the *Mirror*. As one senior *Mirror* writer observes, 'There are a lot of good intentions round here; I just wish they'd come off more often.' □

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IRELAND

After Harrods

Mary Holland on the Tidey kidnap and London car bomb

Dublin

IT'S A LONG WAY from Leitrim to Knightsbridge and not just in terms of geography. There's a local saying that even the crows make sure not to halt their flight in Leitrim because the pickings in this poorest of Irish counties are so meagre for man and beast alike.

Yet the lives lost in the wild scrub countryside of Co. Leitrim and in the streets around Harrods in the week before Christmas may have brought the British and Irish governments closer together in seeking a political solution to the problems of Northern Ireland.

Over the Christmas holiday hundreds of Irish soldiers and policemen were engaged in combing the area from the village of Ballinamore right up to the border in a search for the IRA gang who kidnapped the British supermarket chief, Don Tidey. The very day before the bomb went off outside Harrods, Tidey had been rescued after a three-week search involving large numbers of the Irish security forces. In the final shootout which preceded Tidey's happy reunion with his family a young police recruit and an army private were killed.

The point has been widely made that Private Kelly, who had served with UN peacekeeping forces abroad, was the first Irish soldier to die on active service in his own country since the founding of the State.

The Tidey kidnap and its sometimes violent aftermath, which has involved the police in clashes with armed men across the West of Ireland, has sent shock waves reverberating through Irish society. At last, it seems, the catastrophe which people have so long feared, if only as a distant possibility, now seems a lot more real: that the violence which has torn Northern Ireland apart for the past fifteen years could spread down here.

This is the more alarming because the last week has shown just how dangerously divisive such violence could be. While there has been general condemnation both of the Harrods bomb and of Tidey's ordeal, the Minister of Justice has made the point that those involved in the latter incident could not have escaped unless they had been helped by local people. From the government's point of view the most disturbing aspect of the massive anti-terrorist operation in Co. Leitrim has been the widespread hostility with which the police and the army have been received. It isn't simply that tradespeople have refused to serve soldiers and the police, since in small communities so close to the border this might well be attributed to fear. But when these same security forces have been conducting house-to-house searches they have been in the main received with the kind of anger and contempt familiar to anyone who has grown accustomed to the way the British Army is regarded in Catholic areas of Northern Ireland. But these are Irish soliders and police operating on indisputably Irish territory.

All this has lent considerable urgency to Garret FitzGerald's plea, reiterated in *The Times* last week, that it is time for the British and Irish governments to take joint political action over the North, and to his desire to impress on Mrs Thatcher that there is no such thing as a security solution to the present crisis. The alternative, he implies, is that the violence which has already brought desolation to Ulster could spread, may indeed already be spreading to the Irish Republic and to Britain.

FOR ONCE, it seems that this message may not be doomed to fall on deaf ears. One is not talking simply about official reaction in Britain, but the much broader span of political and public opinion. Dublin is gratified by the marked difference in media coverage, to give but one example, after the Harrods bomb and the appalling human tragedies resulting from it, compared with that which followed other IRA bombs in Britain. Dramatically absent this time have been the accusations that the Irish government is ambivalent about IRA violence and that the Republic is a safe haven for terrorists. Instead much of the coverage has linked the security operation following the Tidey kidnap with that being conducted in London, and has made the point that young Irishmen lost their lives in order to save a British businessman.

It was left to Denis Thatcher to say that 'No damned Irish murderer' was going to stop him from shopping in Harrods, but this was in marked contrast to the tone adopted by his wife, whose telegram to Dr FitzGerald congratulating him on the successful outcome of the Tidey rescue was almost embarrassingly fulsome in praise of the Irish security forces.

Dr FitzGerald knows very well that too much praise of this kind from British sources could very soon become counterproductive. At the moment Provisional Sinn Fein is very much on the defensive and its leadership is fending off attacks from all sides. It seems likely that the Harrods bomb and the Tidey kidnap, together with the murder a short time previously of the young Unionist politician, Edgar Graham, are the visible and appalling results of extreme tensions within the Provos. If they had any political aim, they were designed to halt the progress of Gerry Adams down the political path which he and his supporters are attempting to pursue. They may yet succeed in this if the British and Irish governments decide to proscribe Sinn Fein.

It is too early yet to say whether the balance will be restored in Adams's favour, and what will happen if it is not. But the Irish government, at least, knows that even if the militarist elements within the IRA get the upper hand and derail Adams's political plans, the Provisionals will not go away. Their support in the North, whether it be for the IRA or Sinn Fein, is rooted in political and social resentment of which hostility to the forces of law and order is only one manifestation. To see a similar enmity being displayed by Irish citizens to Irish forces in the Republic is, for that reason, a matter for considerable political concern to the Dublin government.

When Dr FitzGerald met Mrs Thatcher at Chequers at the beginning of November the message he tried to impress on her was that the alienation of the Catholic community in Northern Ireland would not be reversed unless an equitable solution was found to the province's political problems. If the British and Irish governments did not treat the search for such a solution as a matter of immediate urgency, the violence would spread. Since that meeting between the two premiers there has been a spiral of killing, starting with the attack on a gospel hall in South Armagh and continuing to include the deaths of Christmas shoppers in Knightsbridge. This Christmas those who mourned for the victims of the violence which has its roots in the politics of Northern Ireland have included families in Britain and in the Irish Republic. The year ahead may see more such families unless hard political decisions are taken in Dublin and London, to confront together the problems of the North. □

THIS ENGLAND

£3 book tokens for entries printed. (On postcards, please.)

□ Barbara Cartland, royal stepnanny, shares Khashoggi's philosophy. 'I'm a tremendous tipper. It's my personal expression of gratitude to people who've helped me. Whenever I stay the weekend I tip the cook very grandly. I hand her one of my novels with a fiver inside.' – *The Times* (Amanda Welles)

□ Cheshire councillors were warned by their Conservative leader, Cllr Ken Maynard, that putting peace studies on school timetables would turn out a new generation of 'Greenham Common types. This is an attempt to indoctrinate the children of Cheshire,' he said. – *Liverpool Echo* (Roland Caig)

□ Winter can be hard for old people living alone. Aid-Call, a portable alarm, worn as a watch or pendant, links the user with a central 24-hour monitoring system; £375, with an annual fee of £50. Details: Aid-Call, 15 Radnor Walk, SW3. – *Vogue* (Penelope Mortimer)

□ Robert Stirling was found guilty at Glasgow of carrying an offensive weapon – a sword-stick in an ivory cane he bought to go with his top hat and tails. 'I only wear them to parties and Conservative rallies,' he said. – *Financial Times* (Don & Celia Mather)

□ If this country did not export torture equipment then someone else would, said Mr Tebbit, Trade and Industry Secretary, in the Commons yesterday. Then, he added, Labour MPs would 'grumble further about our trade position'. – *Daily Telegraph* (James Scott)

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DIARY

Brian Sedgemore

'Neil Kinnock,' said a backbench Labour MP, 'is not a House of Commons man, so inevitably his performance at the despatch box has been disappointing.' The MP went on to argue that anyone who, like Neil, had been a virtual stranger from the Chamber of the House of Commons for the best part of a decade would find it difficult to interpret and capture the mood of the House. Most other Labour MPs recognise that the problems which stem from Neil's failure to serve a proper apprenticeship are compounded by the existence of a kitchen cabinet, which, though well meaning, hardly contains the accumulated wisdom of the ages. 'It's not the National Union of Students we're asking him to run,' commented a colleague caustically. In defending Neil from his critics and wishing him a prosperous 1984, I've no doubt that he's intelligent and ruthless enough to learn from his mistakes.

○

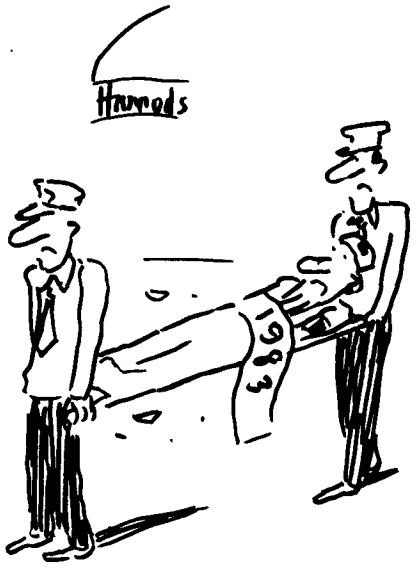
Tory dissidents, perhaps encouraged by the complete demolition job carried out by Prof David Hendry on Milton Friedman's monetarist theories, are expressing increasing contempt for their own government. To Norman St John Stevas's description of the Treasury Front Bench team as 'a poisonous cloud of ideologues and theoreticians' must be added that of the senior wet on the government benches that 'to be top of the hit list of this government may be no bad thing'. Perhaps it's because comments like this get back to Downing Street and unsettle her that Margaret Thatcher can no longer remember meeting important people like Mr Eddie Shah. As she sought to tell Neil Kinnock that she had never met Eddie, I couldn't help recalling the dictum of Algernon Sydney, the seventeenth-century political theorist, that, in politics, 'liars ought to have good memories'.

○

In the Labour Party we constantly deny the validity of the Orwellian dictum that some animals are more equal than others. One expression of this is the readiness of Labour leaders to meet backbench MPs at a moment's notice when the issue is important. Jim Callaghan, no less than Michael Foot, could see the sense in it – no matter how difficult he thought the meeting might be. So members of the Campaign Group were more than a little annoyed recently when they asked Neil Kinnock for an urgent meeting, to discuss the stance he was taking on the NGA dispute and, in particular, his total condemnation of people who stepped outside the law, only to be told that Neil didn't have half an hour to spare, not for some days anyway. The Group's irritation was made worse by the fact that the Shadow Cabinet (Stan Orme and Eric Heffer dissenting) took a decision to denounce support for unlawful action without even consulting the PLP. It thinks that this decision is likely to cause the Labour Party considerable embarrassment when the women of Greenham Common engage in civil disobedience and commit crimes in their efforts to prevent cruise missiles leaving their USA base. The Shadow Cabinet, it seems, is committed to backing Michael Heseltine when he uses the police to crush the peace movement.

○

At last the Select Committees which enable Parliament to scrutinise the Executive have been reconstituted. The chairmanships of these Committees are highly prized and there's been a titanic struggle between two Tories, Kenneth Warren and Peter Emery, to take the Chair of the Trade and Industry Committee. For some weeks the two of them did nothing but snarl at each other – Peter Emery became so desperate that he lobbied Labour MPs for support. One of them, Stan Crowther, was so worried that he wrote to another of his colleagues on the Committee asking him to vote for Emery. The gist of Stan's letter was that, although the only good Tory is a dead Tory, Emery was a much better fellow than Warren. Presumably Stan was unaware that, some years ago, a Select Committee of the House of Commons criticised The Underwater Training Centre of which Emery was Chairman for making excessive profits out of MSC funds. Anyway, when the Tories on the Committee heard that Emery was seeking Labour support, they backed away.



In consequence Warren unexpectedly won by a landslide.

○

Militant-bashing is to Blackburn what Paki-bashing used to be to Bradford. Naturally, MPs were upset when they heard that expulsions were afoot in the constituency because most are anxious that local constituency parties should heed calls for unity. So a number of them, myself included, wrote a short, friendly letter to Blackburn calling for the exercise of restraint. Blackburn officials were furious at what they regarded as interference in their affairs. Jack Straw, the local MP, was furious. Failure to consult him about the letter, said Chief Whip Michael Cocks, constituted a grave offence against Parliamentary convention. The Shadow Cabinet was furious and ordered an enquiry. When some of the MPs concerned refused to cooperate the enquiry was quietly dropped. No mention was made of this in the minutes of the Shadow Cabinet meeting which were circulated to the PLP. Oh for a 1984 in which all Party members are equal and none is more equal than others.

○

It's not only the courts that are worried about the leaking of documents whose disclosure might be prejudicial to the security of the nation. A colleague of mine, who was travelling by air to Brussels recently, was disturbed to see a Member of the European Parliament handling a NATO document marked 'Top Secret'. As the MEP took the document out of the number of envelopes in which it was encased, my colleague, who was sitting next to him and reading a newspaper, manoeuvred himself into a position where he could read the contents of the document. He then witnessed the MEP turn the document over and write on the back:

My dearest . . .,
I love you. Last night was the best . . .

Code breakers the world over will realise that the message could pose an even greater threat to security than the leaking of the secret memo about cruise to the *Guardian*.

ROGER WODDIS

Bravely through tears

'We express our condolences and sympathy to all those who suffered as a result of Saturday's outrage. Today we are open for business as usual.' – Harrods ad

Today we are open
For business as usual,
For life must go on
More defiantly still,
With one eye made wet
By the dead and the dying,
The other one set
On the cash in the till.

It may appear tasteless
To carry on trading,
And calling us callous
Is all very well,
But closing runs counter
To all we believe in:
When others have bought it,
Our job is to sell.

Although clearing shoppers
Away from the danger
Meant losing a million,
We're too proud to beg.
This House is defiant,
Though putting an ad in
Has already cost us
An arm and a leg.

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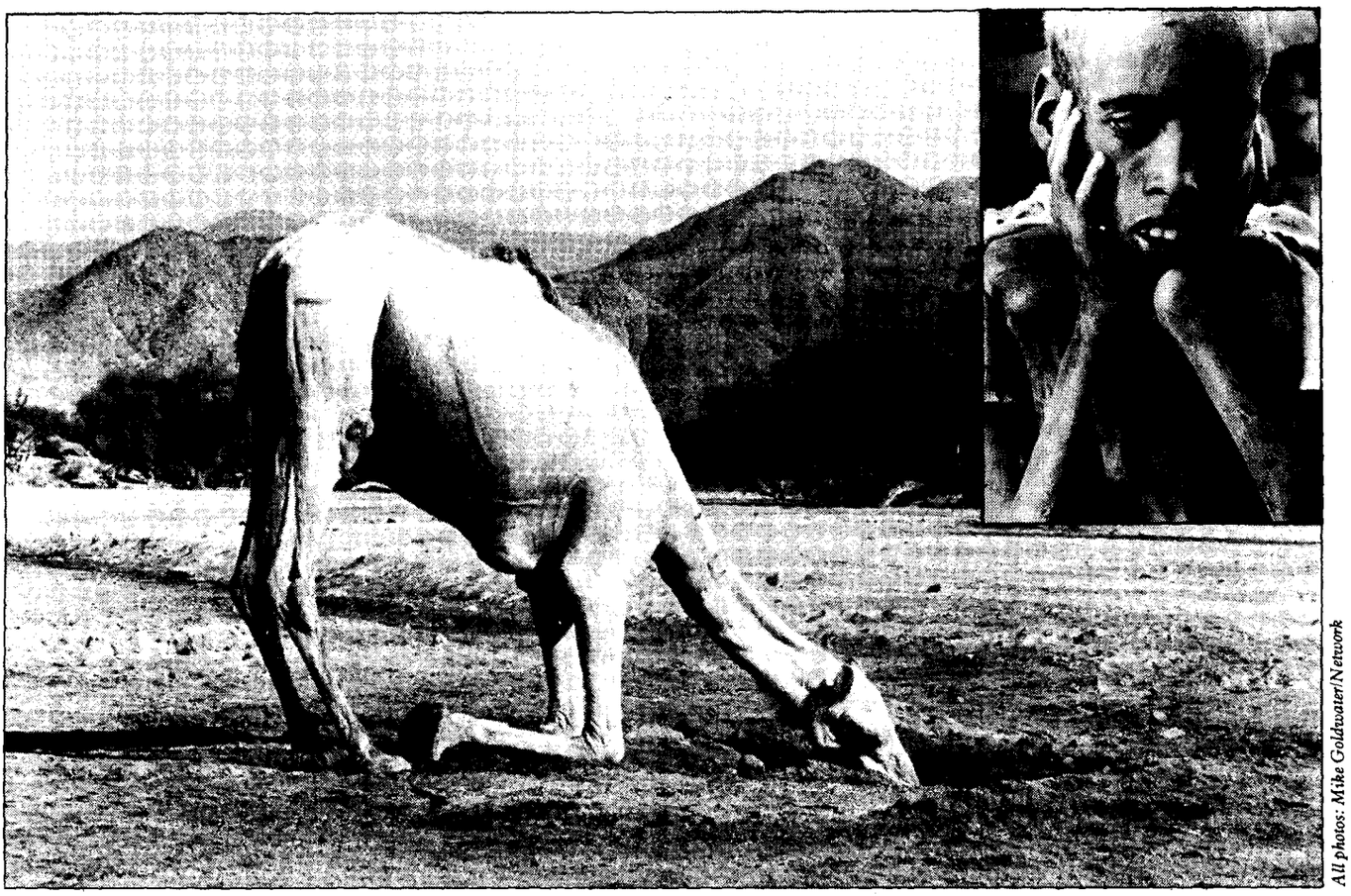

All photos: Mike Goldwater/Network

FOREIGN NEWS: ERITREA

Bloodied but not bowed

John Pilger reports on the plight of a forgotten nation in the Horn of Africa being brought to its knees by forces from both West and East

THE PICTURES on these pages by Mike Goldwater, recently returned from Eritrea, portray a nation on which governments of East and West have collectively turned their backs. For anyone who has been there, the memory of Eritrea's uniqueness and tragedy remains indelible: that of a courageous people, with few resources and little help from outside, fighting the surrogates of both superpowers for the right to an independence denied them for 22 years.

Eritrea's 'mistake' is to be allied with no one, to go it alone, to grow its own socialism, to have no political debts. They are neither 'secessionists' nor 'rebels'; these are fraudulent terms used by the Ethiopians and adopted by much of the foreign media. The Eritreans have an historic, legal and moral right to nationhood, as the British should know. It was they who administered Eritrea after driving out the Italians in the '40s, and, in 1952, supported a UN decision that Eritrea would be 'constituted as an autonomous unit federated with Ethiopia.'

When, in 1962, Haile Selassie attacked and annexed Eritrea, abolished its parliament, bombed its towns and villages, banned its languages and murdered thousands of its partisans, the West did nothing; Ethiopia, with its US communications bases, was then firmly in the Western 'camp'. When the Emperor was overthrown by a gang of army officers with wondrous claims to being 'Marxist revolutionaries', the war against Eritrea was intensified and the Russians arrived in Addis Ababa. Had Moscow, which once trumpeted the Eritreans' cause, stayed away, these slight, flint-tough and graceful people might now have recovered their homeland.

But it didn't, and now the drought which has swept through Africa has ravaged much of Eritrea. The disaster is usually seen in Ethiopian terms; the Ethiopian Government, the *Dergue*, when appealing for help for millions of people, does not say that they include the people of Eritrea and Tigray, of which territory eighty-five per cent is beyond Ethiopian control. The result, say reports from Eritrea (whose extreme isolation makes *any* news hard to confirm), is that no substantial quantities of powdered milk, butter oil and other essentials, necessary to forestall widespread malnutrition among children, have reached them for many months.

Above: camel trying to get a drink from a dry river bed and (inset) nine-year-old malnutrition victim

Only hospital patients get vegetables now. No large consignment of blankets has been received for four years; children and the disabled often share pieces of frayed cloth. It is five years since the last large batch of tents arrived; rags strewn across bushes are commonplace. The Eritreans' principal source of support is their own Eritrean Relief Association, which, in Britain, raises funds from public appeals and from grants by voluntary agencies which admire the ERA's efficiency. War on Want, for example, concentrates its efforts on Eritrea; but other agencies, which have bases in Ethiopia, have to assist less publicly. Not unreasonably they do not wish to upset their vital work among the stricken regions of Ethiopia itself. But this 'sensitivity', as they say in the aid business, would make a joint national appeal for Eritrea in this country extremely difficult to mount.

With the Russians in Addis Ababa, why are

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Ethiopian prisoners of war captured by Eritreans

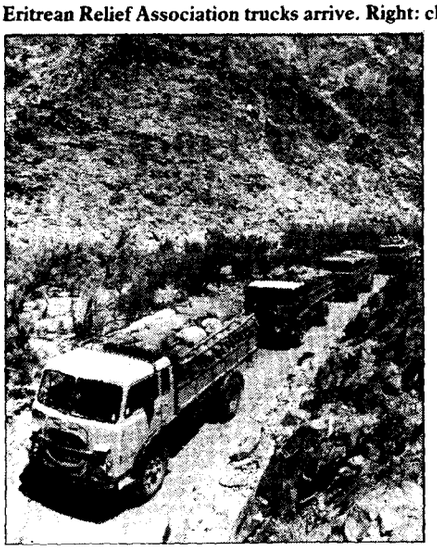
the Eritreans not favoured by the current right-wing ideologues of the West? The answer is that Western governments long ago rumbled the fact that the *Dergue* was not 'progressive', but represents the same Amhara chauvinism practised by the regime of Haile Selassie. So governments such as Mrs Thatcher's have shown themselves stubbornly in favour of placating Ethiopia in the hope that the *Dergue* will drop its dependence on the Russians and 'come West': a hope informally and skilfully encouraged in Addis Ababa. The EEC, for example, which suspended aid to 'Emperor' Boukassa and 'Field Marshal' Amin in 1976, has ensured a free flow of aid to Ethiopia – aid, of course, that is urgently needed – without condemning the widespread repression.

In the meantime, an especially vicious war is waged against Eritrea's mostly civilian population – and virtually nothing about it has been uttered by a British politician or reported by the British press. There is evidence pointing to the use of toxic gasses, which the Ethiopians deny. They also deny that which I have seen: the use against villages and refugee camps of Napalm 'B', which sticks to human skin and fries to the bone, sometimes over a period of weeks, and of cluster bombs, the kind whose myriad needles 'swim' through human flesh and organs and are often difficult to detect under X-ray, if there was X-ray. I shall not easily forget the sight of an Eritrean paramedic at work, amputating limbs by candlelight with only a saw, surgical spirit and a mouth gag.

The United States restrains Somalia, its 'ally' in the Horn, in spite of repeated attacks by Ethiopia. Both Washington and Moscow have a common purpose in ensuring that the *Dergue* remains capable of fighting on all fronts, especially against Eritrea. They realise that an independent, non-aligned Eritrea would be an obstacle to both of them. Therefore, the Eritreans, among whom an estimated 600,000 face the extremities of hunger and disease, are 'expendable', their epic and seemingly endless struggle, in which they fight like lions, to be 'forgotten'. I suggest that it should not be. □

The Eritrean Relief Association's address is BCM Box 865, London WC1V 6XX. Telephone: 01-521 6404.

Eritrean Relief Association trucks arrive. Right: child wounded in Ethiopian attack



CHINA

Art for the Party's sake

Jonathan Mirsky reports on a new clamp-down on artists and writers

THE NAME Jean-Paul Sartre must be a mouthful for Tibet's two million yak-herders and barley-growers, but now, at least, they have heard it. Two weeks ago in Lhasa, Party First Secretary Yin Fatang warned his propaganda officials against the dangers of 'alienation' as part of the Central Committee's drive to hoover 'spiritual pollution' from over one billion minds.

It is the Party's latest attempt – they have been occurring since 1942 – to bring intellectuals to heel. Wherever intellectuals may be – in Tibet; on the grasslands of Inner Mongolia; in Peking's highpowered research institutes – they are now on notice that, for the immediate future, the number-one foreign pariah, despite his 'progressive political views', is the high-priest of indivualism, Sartre.

The timing of the current pressure on artists and writers is no coincidence. They are always among the first targets whenever a new Party purge gets underway. This one began two months ago, will last three years and is being paralleled by an anti-crime crackdown – which reportedly includes over 700,000 arrests and 5,000 executions, some for murder and rape, others for stealing jade from museums.

Now it is the turn of authors, composers and painters. Even the poets in the Peoples Liberation Army have been forced to pledge that their works contain no 'riddles'. Under such circumstances, the Party's voice, the *Peoples Daily*, must be absolutely reliable. During the Cultural Revolution, as its editor later admitted, 'we printed packs of lies' in carrying out the Gang's commands. After the post-Mao relaxation began, the *Peoples Daily* printed more critical articles. But the line has altered yet again and, two weeks ago, the paper's Director and its chief ideologist were sacked, for allowing to creep into their pages the notion that 'alienation' can exist under socialism.

Last March, *Peoples Daily* ran the text of a speech by China's oldest literary commissar, Zhou Yang, Chairman of the Chinese Federation of Literature and Art and, since 1942, Maoism's intellectual inquisitor. In it, Zhou suggested that, under certain circumstances – such as during the Gang period, in which he had suffered – alienation emerges even in revolutionary societies.

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Now Zhou Yang has grovelled. 'I was rash and imprudent,' he confessed to the *Peoples Daily*. At 76, he is not keen to be 'dragged out and smashed' yet again.

Also in the Party's line of fire is the 75-year-old novelist Ouyang Shan, another Maoist ex-victim, who – in 1964, two years before the Cultural Revolution – was denounced as a gangster and revisionist and did not return to writing until 1979. Like Zhou Yang, the elderly Ouyang Shan wants a quiet life and has rushed to attack a brother novelist for 'advocating absolute human nature and bourgeois humanitarianism'.

Mao may be in disfavour in China these days – but not on matters of discipline, especially when it comes to literature. As Party Secretary Yin Fatang told his subordinates in Tibet, writers are (as Stalin used to say) 'engineers of men's souls'. This has been the Maoist and the Party's view since the Chairman laid it down in 1942, seven years before the Communist victory.

Any writer since then who has even hinted that individual human feelings do not arise immediately and recognisably from class can be sure of trouble – especially so since literature and art ('sugar-coated bullets') are deemed especially dangerous because they surge past ideological defences on waves of emotion.

It never bothered Mao Zedong that such strictures might throttle the imagination. 'Doesn't Marxism destroy the creative mood?' the Chairman once asked. 'Yes, it does. It definitely destroys . . . feudal, bourgeois, petty-bourgeois, liberal, nihilistic, art-for-arts-sake, aristocratic, decadent, and every other creative mood alien to the masses – they should all be destroyed.'

For 40 years, China's writers and artists have been commanded to furnish propaganda and, since the early '50s, deviants have suffered and died. Not long ago, Party General Secretary Hu Yaobang condemned 'bourgeois liberalism which destroys our morale, dampens our convictions, and bewilders our minds.' Deng Xiaoping, as usual, has been more blunt. 'The essence of bourgeois liberalism is to oppose Party leadership, he said, and, last week, the Party's ideological organ, *Red Flag*, alleged that some of the 'liberals' were once Cultural Revolution terrorists. Such a charge is designed to enlist support from anxious intellectuals who want no replay of the Gang period.

Some foreign observers imagine that Deng is overseeing the effort to discipline intellectuals in order to signal to his tougher colleagues that he will not permit China's opening to the West to weaken its political fibre. But Deng, in his own right, is no believer in creative freedom. In 1958, when he was Party General Secretary, he participated in the campaign which punished thousands of 'Rightists' (the same word used for errant writers today), some of whom waited 20 years for rehabilitation. And it was Deng who, in 1980, ordered the closing of Peking's Democracy Wall and accused many of the pamphleteers of subversion. Most of the leading ones are still behind bars, or are labouring in 're-education' camps on the remote frontiers.

The Party's propaganda bureau has stated that the writers currently under fire are not regarded as enemies. It remains to be seen how reassuring this is. In 1979, after her release from two decades of detention, including years of solitary confinement, China's celebrated woman novelist, Ding Ling, recalled that in the '30s Chiang Kaishek had banned her books. In 1958, she added, 'we ourselves' did the banning. She wondered if all the writers who had been persecuted with her 'really deserved to be treated like dung'. But Ding Ling is now 75. The Party can be pretty sure that, like her fellow veteran authors – all, without exception, survivors of past purges – she will either remain silent or, if necessary, appear in public to say whatever the leaders require. □

GERMANY

Centigrade 600

Tony Catterall on a lethal industrial hazard

Cologne

AS FROM THE END of this year, the giant West German chemicals firm Bayer is to cease production of polychloride biphenyl (PCB), more than two years after its real dangers became evident.

PCB, the insulating and cooling material used in most large electrical transformers, has long been suspected as a cause of gene damage and cancer. Even more seriously, when heated to around 600° C, it gives off polychloride dibenzo para-dioxin (PCDD) – a close relative of tetrachloride dibenzo dioxin (TCDD), the poison which contaminated large areas of the northern Italian town of Seveso after the chemicals factory explosion there seven years ago.

Being practically fireproof and cheaper than the alternative silicon-based coolants, PCB was seen, when introduced about 50 years ago, as perfect for use in transformers. What was not known – or not publicised – was the way in which it could degenerate. Suspicions were raised in the late 1970s after fires in large buildings in Canada, Australia and Sweden, but the real alarm was not sounded until 1981. A fire in the basement of a New York office building heated the transformers there past the critical point and PCDD fumes were carried throughout the building by the air-conditioning system. They so permeated its structure that not even the demolition men will be allowed in until next year.

Although an alternative transformer coolant was brought on to the market in the United States, very little seems to have been done to pass on information about PCB internationally. Officials in West Germany were apparently unconcerned until the head of the Frankfurt Fire Department, Ernst Achilles, returned from a visit to New York bearing the full facts.

A meeting of State Interior Ministers in October last year decided that, as a first step, there should be a nation-wide survey of all installations containing transformers to find the extent of the problem. The answer was that there were 60,000 PCB-filled transformers containing an estimated 30,000 tons of the coolant. And that 'first step' is almost all that has been done. Special alarm systems, similar to those in nuclear power stations, are now compulsory on such transformers – but the replacement of the PCB is only to be carried out 'eventually'.

This was not good enough for Fire Chief Achilles, who earlier this year went public with his story. 'There are,' he said, '60,000 mini-Sevesos in West Germany, just waiting to happen.' He said that every second transformer his department checked in Frankfurt should be replaced and that there is nothing to indicate that Frankfurt is atypical. Although most public buildings have their transformers in sealed, fire-proof rooms, he said, the situation with many industrial installations was 'almost criminal' – just a wire cage surrounding the transformer in a corner of the factory floor.

'Instead of defusing the chemical time-bombs, they are merely being listed,' he said, calling for an immediate ban on the production of PCB and an urgent programme to replace the coolant in PCB-filled transformers. He contends that the critical temperature is reached within 15 minutes in a normal building fire, and that, in the event of a fire at a major installation, whole neighbourhoods would have to be evacuated.

Bayer, which is the only manufacturer of PCB in West Germany, had for some time been resiting attempts by the West Berlin Health Department to have the chemical banned, on the grounds that its links with gene damage and cancer had not been proven and that, in 50 years of production, there had been no accidents reported. Once the evidence from the New York fire came to light – and after it had developed a substitute coolant of its own – the chemical company agreed to cease production at the end of the year. In the meantime, it has manufactured another 2,000 to 3,000 tons of the PCB, which has continued to go into transformers.

Even when production does end, it will not be the result of a formal ban: instead, the Federal Interior Ministry has an 'agreement' with the chemical industry. And, despite an earlier announcement that PCB disposal would be brought under the same regulations as other known poisonous wastes, the ministry has now decided the industry can safely be left to itself. This means that PCB can still be legally burned along with waste oil, in disposal plants operating at above the temperature which produces PCDD but below that which safely destroys the chemical. In theory, it should not happen. But there are only three purpose-built PCB disposal plants in the country, none of which can handle more than 1,000 tons a year. □

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BRETÉCHER
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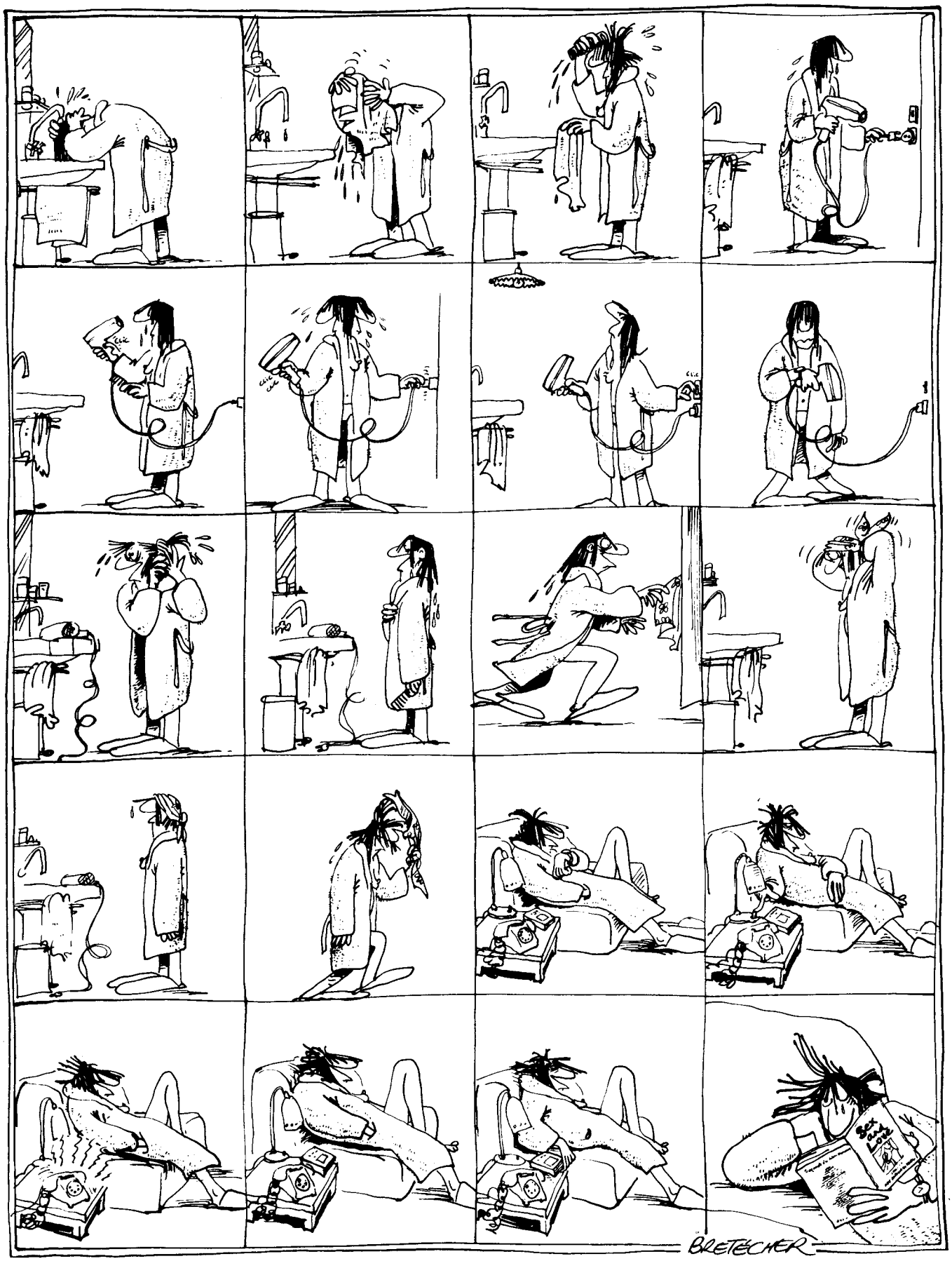

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LETTERS

Angry of Liverpool

P. M. Mason, Liverpool

Your article 'Mersey Militants' (*NS* 16/23 December) showed a lack of understanding of local politics in Liverpool and an oddly muddled idea of the 'working classes', whoever they may be, however dogma defines them.

First, the most obvious mistakes. The first action of Liverpool City Council as run by the Labour Party was to announced a package of reforms including the decision to create 2,000 new jobs in the city and to abolish the Lord Mayor. Of course, the press leapt gleefully at the latter suggestion, largely ignoring the former. Abolition had, in fact, been put forward before, during a Liberal reign in the city.

You say that the schools reorganisation in Liverpool was opposed by the working class. In Liverpool (in Britain) there are many different sorts of working-class people. Those who live in low-rated areas and have to exist on supplementary benefit; those who are employed, have semi-detached houses and cars. The second sort were the ones who paraded their opposition to the schools plan.

Mother Teresa's hostel was closed because it did not meet with the regulations laid down for such establishments. To voice opposition to this move is tantamount to declaring the benefits of shoddily-run charity over well-controlled council provision. As for Catholicism in Liverpool, it is not the large, simple force sociology would like to believe it.

I don't really think abstract socialist theories fit in Liverpool – hence the lack of trendy, GLC-style politics. In Liverpool, you talk of the unemployed rather than the workers. Lack of jobs; lack of hospital beds; lack of houses – do we really need to declare ourselves a 'nuclear free zone' (whatever that means)? Do we need a campaign for equal opportunities for blacks and women when 'equality' means a life on the dole and death on an NHS waiting list?

You suggest that Liverpool might make a glorious sacrifice for the cause of Socialism Almighty, by destroying itself – and thus moving the government 'a little'. Where does that leave the people of Liverpool? What a typical middle-class dilettante attitude to politics!

On the hoardings that cover one of the windows of one of the closed-down shops in the city centre, someone has written, in large letters, 'I am very angry.' So am I.

Tory MP for SDP?

Phillip Oppenheim MP, House of Commons

What extraordinarily thorough investigative journalists you are fortunate enough to include amongst your staff! They actually found out that ten years ago I spoke in favour of the abolition of private education in a school debate – clearly at variance with Conservative party policy (*NS* 2 December).

Far, however, from proving that the Party has a mole amongst its ranks, surely this proves the broad-minded nature of the British public school system which insisted – whether I liked it or not – not only that should I appreciate the arguments of the other side but also, as part of a debating exercise, should actually propound its views (albeit for lack of any great enthusiasm or willingness on the part of other school members to do so). In speaking in this debate, I admit that I felt somewhat like an advocate called upon to defend an obviously guilty criminal.

You can imagine my paranoia at the thought of what other schoolboy sins I committed, but, to save you any more trouble, I admit that I did once come on to play rugby for a visiting school against my own school when they turned up with only 14 men; perhaps I had better join the SDP.

On your Byker

Graham Woodford, Newcastle upon Tyne

Jules Lubbock who reviewed *Byker* (*NS* 9 December) probably doesn't know that Sirkka Kontinen's book and film have created a great deal of controversy – and some irritation – in Newcastle. But Jules really should be aware that the camera sometimes fails to tell the whole truth.

First, the book had no pictures of water running down the inside walls of the tatty old Byker houses; no pictures of rogue landlords collecting their rents and the less than gentle action taken if they didn't get it. A next door neighbour of mine, who features in the book as an inhabitant of old Byker, regarded the obtaining of a decent place to live elsewhere as a more 'politically important act' than having her dreams recorded.

Secondly, the new Byker has as much relation to Corbusier's 'antiseptic modernism' – the actuality of which is debatable – as I have to Louis Aragon. New Byker is popular: the waiting list to get a place is ten years long. It is lively. It is a delight to walk around in. It is too easy to associate the name of Dan Smith with it and condemn by implication, without reference to what actually exists. And, although a myth has been established about the extent of participation and consultation in the Byker scheme, if only a small proportion of the imagination and care had gone into the design and planning of hundreds of other local authority schemes – some in Newcastle – many of the dreadful problems that now exist could have been avoided.

No sane person would defend Wilfred Burns's view. But can sentimental romanticism about the quality of working-class culture be defended either? People often dream about the things they do not have, Jules. Like a decent home and environment to live in.

Anti-imperialist road to peace

A. Singh, Newcastle upon Tyne

Sarah Benton's report on the CND annual conference (*NS* 9 December) included two disturbing comments: one about Youth CND, the other about black people and CND. As a black member of both CND and the Labour Party, I would like to say that her attitude towards black people is patronising.

She suggests, in effect, that black people can be brought into CND through the movement's adopting some sort of anti-imperialist leanings. But surely it is white people who need to have an anti-imperialist strand within CND. E. P. Thompson's defence of white Western civilisation smells dangerously of the old missionary attitude of wanting to save the decorative values behind which lies a detestable tradition of exploitation, oppression and barbarity.

My suspicion increases when I hear that CND is a one-issue compaign in regard to the attacks on the New Jewel Movement in Grenada and on the PLO and the Lebanese national movement, yet not where Charter 77 and human rights in Eastern Europe are concerned. CND should understand that a peace movement does exist in third-world countries, in the form of the anti-imperialist movements, and applaud such developments. I would argue that every time the US deploys conventional weapons in local wars, the risk of nuclear warfare increases.

In regard to Youth CND, Sarah Benton fails to express alarm at the fact that Dan Smith made an attempt to sensationalise some bits of an internal document from Revolution Youth as a rationale for creating an interim youth committee. If CND slips into such behaviour, it will legitimise the creeping McCarthysim within our society. Only if *everyone* has the right to hold a position in CND (election being the only condition), can we begin to free ourselves from the ludicrous charges of being Soviet puppets. CND must preserve political freedoms.

Overexposure in North Atlantic

George Robertson MP, House of Commons

I too am a Labour MP on the Council of the British Atlantic Committee. I am also sick of the so-called 'exposés' which now annually follow its Annual Report (*NS* 9 December).

BAC is in the business of education and information about NATO and has had grants to pursue this from Labour and Conservative governments. Last year, at the behest of some of us on the Council, all of the more campaigning work was transferred to 'Peace through NATO', on which Labour members are not represented.

Each year, the Labour Party has voted by huge majorities to continue to support NATO. This year, CND voted to leave it. Why not then 'expose' the Labour Party members in this body which is campaigning against Party policy?

Ploys will be ploys

J. A. Preece, Director Information Services, British Nuclear Fuels

In his article 'Windscale, six years later . . .' (*NS* 9 December) Rob Edwards quotes selectively from the Health and Safety Executive report of 1981 on 'The Management of Safety at Windscale'. He does not quote the acknowledgement in the report for the strenuous efforts made to improve arrangements for achieving a high standard of safety at Windscale in recent years, nor does he refer to the HSE comment that the report should not be taken to give the impression that Windscale is a dangerous place at which to work or near which to live.

BNFL has already acknowledged the error which led to the recent incident involving radioactive contamination of the beach near Sellafield. Regrettable though that incident is, in BNFL's view it was an isolated lapse from our normally high safety standards.

On the question of the thermal oxide reprocessing plant, you should know that the preparatory site work is complete, that the detailed engineering design is well advanced and that all that is preventing a start on construction is the withholding of detailed planning approval by the local authority as part of a political ploy to persuade the government to accelerate a local road improvement scheme.

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Bernard Crick

The way it was

Ernie Bevin: a fine working-class leader

Ernest Bevin: Foreign Secretary
ALAN BULLOCK *Heinemann* £30

Anyone who seriously wishes to understand the British Labour movement must read Lord Bullock's trilogy, 'The Life and Times of Ernest Bevin', a masterpiece of contemporary scholarship. It is immensely detailed yet never trivial and his summing up is judicious and balanced in the finest sense: no evidence is suppressed, rather its relevance explained, and the reader is made the jury not a mere witness to a pre-judged sentence. The first volume, *Trade Union Leader*, appeared in 1960, then *Minister of Labour* in 1967 – a long gap to *Foreign Secretary* which is also a concise history of British foreign policy 1945-50. But this third volume, long laboured and premeditated, is somehow timely, as we all ponder, parochially, whether we are witnessing the revival of a new Labour Party or its final fall after a long decline and, more generally, whether we are on the edge of world disarmament or world destruction.

'Bevin ended the war with a reputation second only to Churchill's for getting things done', says Bullock. Before the war he was the leader of the largest trade union in the world, the TGWU – largely his own creation – and he had deliberately chosen 'Labour' as his wartime portfolio, seeing that manpower planning would replace Treasury control in total war. No serious historian can doubt that Britain achieved a greater and more efficient mobilisation of labour and resources than any of the Allies or Axis powers or that Bevin had a key role in this. Labour's influence in the wartime coalition created the structure of the postwar Welfare State, only now being called into question; and even in foreign policy had rendered the postwar de-colonisation inevitable. The familiar jibe that the old *New Statesman* Left hurled at Bevin and Attlee – 'carrying on coalition policies' – bore conviction only with new MPs unfamiliar with Labour's power in the wartime coalition: the nation's dependence on the mobilisation of labour. That was 'our finest hour' – not quite what Churchill had meant.

The jibe that Tories hurled at him – that we had an uneducated and coarse man without aitches at the helm – rebounded. Few Foreign Secretaries could ever have had more practical experience of large-scale negotiation and a more relevant training than in the wartime inner Cabinet.

Illegitimate, soon orphaned, he had worked as a carter in Bristol until he organised 'em, and had no formal education: indeed, his learning had come from – as he told George VI – 'the 'edgerows of experience'. But that experience was massive, including international as well as national negotiation. He never read books, but sucked up documents like a vacuum cleaner, fine print and all, and he had done so for the Union. At the Ministry of Labour and at the Foreign Office he cleared his boxes nightly, took on his officials in the morning, and gave clear and precise instructions, sniffing at each tree but chewing the real wood. He scoffed at the notion of the Foreign Office controlling him, and took the simple (and I think true) view that anyone who knows what he wants and has the willpower can master the machine. In 1945-50, foreign policy was in the hands of Bevin: Attlee trusted him and gave him scope. No 'yes-man' he. Not since Palmerston was there such a Foreign Secretary and probably never again.

Bullock allows himself few speculations. He wonders only in one sentence what difference it would have made to British postwar policy if Ernie had gone to the Treasury as he had wanted. Attlee finally decided to keep him away from Herbert Morrison to keep the peace on the home front. They detested each other for reasons which had nothing to do with a left-right dichotomy – such is political life.

The first chapter, 'The world in the summer of 1945', is a brilliant piece of historical recreation, showing how things appeared at the time, not the polemical history of 'how things should have been different' which has enabled the Labour Left so often to escape from political reality into mythology. The new Labour majority in Parliament had great expectations for a radical breach of prewar diplomacy, in part at least because the Coalition Government had deliberately played down wartime differences. Bullock shows clearly that 1945-47 was a period of fundamental uncertainty and that until 1947 Bevin did not despair of a clear agreement with the Communists and was against organising an anti-Communist coalition. But this uncertainty did not create freedom of manoeuvre – rather it took time to realise that Stalin was interested not in a clear settlement, but in consolidating the power he had gained in Eastern Europe and, while staying

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far short of threats or risks of war, was keeping his options open and the pot boiling (well, simmering), especially in France and Italy. Both the USSR and the USA had deep prior commitments, the one to territorial security and the other to 'world free trade'; and both of these effectively precluded a neutral Europe as a buffer state rather than one, as the only real alternative emerged, divided by an 'Iron Curtain', then and now. Bullock has little sympathy with either kind of revisionist argument that the USSR (or the USA) policies were simply a reaction to the other's prior aggression. Things went back further than that.

The main problem at the time was the impending economic collapse of Great Britain and the rest of Western Europe when the USA ended Lend-Lease, demanding an end to Protection as the price for a loan. The Americans also showed every sign of precipitate military withdrawal from Europe before a line could be stabilised, when Stalin was plainly pushing his frontiers as far west as he could without actually risking war. There was no choice but to continue the American alliance, but now on very diminished and subsidiary terms. It was the war that both created the Welfare State and destroyed the very economic power on which its implementation in Britain had been thought to depend.

Bevin and Attlee were grimly aware of our exhaustion and dependence. Only old imperialists, on the one hand, and the 'Keep Left Group', on the other, believed that Britain could pursue an independent foreign policy. The bigger dilemma, that Bullock considers in his final chapter 'Bevin's place in British history', was whether we could have shed our crippling overseas commitments sooner. Bullock's answer seems to be 'no'; not until the Americans were slowly willing to take over – for the issues *were* economic as much as military and, within all those tangled dilemmas, does anyone on the Left now think that Stalin had an acceptable answer or that Stalinism was simply a product of Western antagonism? Trotsky had already given a definitive answer to that.

Don't be deterred by the mammoth size of the book. Read the first two chapters first on the state of the world in 1945 and Bevin's role in the postwar Labour Government. They are vastly informative, and almost beyond praise for cool, judicious clarity. Then read the last chapter. If you are still not convinced that Ernie should be, warts and all, in the pantheon with Bevan as the finest working-class leaders in the century, then skip and dip among the 19 chronological studies. It was all so very different from what we now vaguely misremember or have been led to imagine. We must move from myth to reality: if one would change the world, then one must understand it as it was and is. The Left should honour Ernie like Nye as a great example of what ordinary people can do with conviction and common sense, do possibly better than those of formal learning, and not revile him because intellectuals like Kingsley Martin, Richard Crossman and Harold Laski thought they could have done his job better. We should understand what such tasks involve. □

FICTION
Roger Lewis

Enclosed worlds

Locus Solus
RAYMOND ROUSSEL *Calder* £4.95
Ring of Truth
VERNON SCANNELL *Robson* £8.95
Thomas Lyster
DAVID WURTZEL *Brilliance* £7.95 & £3.50

If Raymond Roussel had not existed, he is the kind of artist whom everyone would have loved to invent. Arrogantly eccentric, he lived a life purely in the imagination. The random irritants which constitute reality were kept at bay by the power of money. His publishers record that he would embark upon Grand Tours, yet never leave the comfort of his hotel. To have walked abroad would have been as demeaning as for a bishop to be discovered taking time off in a brothel.

Roussel's novels are despatches from his sepulchre. **Locus Solus** is especially a fantasied autobiography. Professor Canterel lives in luxurious solitude with his inventions. His 'enormous wealth imposes no limits upon his prolific ingenuity' and the book is structured as a conducted tour around his bibelots. In this way, what is presented as a novel is actually an omnibus of short stories: disclosed objects are the excuse for a tale. A statue made of loam, for instance, sets off an account of King Juel who discovered a cavern studded with ingots. Realising that, if the gold were mined, it would ruin the rate of exchange, he renders the cave impregnable with magic. The cabbalistic code is only to be revealed when the world is in mortal danger, and then only through a complicated series of heavenly signals.

The remarkable thing about Roussel's fairy stories is that they contain no moral. He doesn't bother to sum up with a Christmas-cracker caveat. This, indeed, is the tone of the whole book: there is a divine uselessness about all the activities it records. Canterel, a combination of Willy Wonker and Baron Frankenstein, invents a machine to anticipate the weather. Yet the meteorological balloons, perfected in alliance with a device to extract teeth, have no altruistic import. Their purpose is to bear aloft the collection of molars and bring them to land in a giant dental mosaic that Canterel is making to depict a story that he then proceeds to tell. An entombed villain finds a mouldering book and reads of rescue by an innocent lady. He looks up from the text to find that he himself is being offered salvation by a maiden who has found her way to the dungeon by a sequence of secret passages. Interestingly, what bothers Roussel is not the fable but the engineering details appertaining to the hidden doors. The mechanics of the escape route, rather than the mechanics of escape, are what he is most passionate about.

One of Canterel's proudest achievements is a tank full of special water in which mammals are able to breathe. He has developed 'submarine respiration' and in the tank bobs the flayed head of Danton. An electrified cat has been trained to touch it with a metal horn, making the muscles undergo 'a powerful discharge causing them to behave as though under the influence of old routines'. Danton's guillotined bonce is forced to emit extracts from his speeches.

Roussel has been compared with Proust. Apart from the embarrassing hyperbole of this linkage, there are also major stylistic differences: Proust's limpidity is a means of caging memories, of coaxing recollections of childhood from the recesses of time; Roussel's clarity is a parody of scientific precision. Proust's cork-lined study was a sanctuary in which his past could be resurrected uncontaminated. Roussel's privacy is that of a mind feeding upon itself with incestuous relish. It is the womb that he tries to regain for himself, a numinous stupor like the suspended animation of Canterel's tank. *Locus Solus* chronicles the sequestration of madness. The lucid, careful language is that of the lunatic. As Chesterton said, 'The madman is not the man who has lost his reason. The madman is the man who has lost everything except his reason.'

Vernon Scannell's **Ring of Truth** is also unflorrid, but here the prosaical does not disguise macabre flights of fancy. The subject is the cruel world of professional

The Origins of Trade Union Power
Henry Phelps Brown
This important and timely book, by one of the leading authorities on industrial relations, examines in detail the relation between trade unions and the law, and the endeavours of governments to exert controls. Critical moments and vital forces in trade union history are identified, and there are comparative studies with the USA, Canada, and Australia. £15
'Brilliant, magisterial . . . it deserves to become a classic.' **New Society**
Oxford University Press

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boxing. It might well be that a good writer is, among other things, one who can interest us in an activity which would otherwise remain unencountered. This is the case in this novel. Dave, middle-weight champion of the world, is married to dull Aileen, 'a sort of juvenile Baptist aunt'. But his mousy spouse at least leaves him free to dedicate his energies to his sport. Into his life comes temptation in the shape of shapely Judy, 'the popular Leeds soprano'. *Ring of Truth* charts Dave's dilemmas as he tries to cope with his mistress, 'a shop-cake, thrilling, colourful, sweet . . . and bad for you', his silly scold of a wife and an impending big fight in which his title has to be defended.

Though the conversations and bad grammar of dialect pall, the novel is dotted with excellent observations. Best friend Tom's account of heroism is fine: 'And they'll fight, if necessary, to the death . . . It's a gleam of pure light in a dark bloody world.' The jibe at middle-aged hooting being not merriment, but advertisements of 'confidence, wealth and power', is very true. Norman Mailer, macho-man, is brilliantly drubbed: 'I bet he wears drag when he's writing that stuff.' Scannell has also observed 'the part mincing, part strutting gait that fighters so often affect'.

This kind of thing would cause a frisson in the inmates of **Thomas Lyster,** David Wurtzel's blatantly homosexual reworking of *Brideshead Revisited*. This modern version of Waugh is witty and clever, but rather too wish-fulfilling to claim serious attention. The book's characters are not camp, but the style is. Wurtzel is content to ogle rather than convey his characters' deepest thoughts. □

Medbh McGuckian

Staying in a better hotel

Spring seemed to hold more weather
Than elsewhere; it was full of medicine,
A warning device whose tight flowers
I liked to watch not breaking time,
But gathering in their least softness
The future saying 'soon' to the present.

From my hair I understood,
Like a house under construction,
How used I was to being kept alive;
A house so perfect all the doors
Grew smaller at the top, and
The windows were addressing the past.

CULTURE
Mervyn Jones

On the move

All That Is Solid Melts Into Air
MARSHALL BERMAN *Verso* £18.50 & £5.95

What is this book about? Among other subjects, Goethe's *Faust,* the drama of the city streets, *The Communist Manifesto* considered as a work of literature, the Crystal Palace, Baudelaire's poems, the structure of Czarist autocracy, Bob Dylan, Nietzsche, and the destruction of the Bronx. Let me say at once that it's the sort of book that should be reviewed at a length approximating to a complete issue of the *New Statesman.* It's a bubbling cauldron of ideas, of which some are powerfully convincing, a few are strained or far-fetched, and many are stimulating springboards for debate.

The book is nevertheless a synthesising work with a strong central theme – that of 'the modern' in literature, art, thought and social or political aspiration. This term has to be understood in a special sense; obviously, modernity in the ordinary meaning of 'up to date' must bow to the passage of time, and Euripides was once a modern poet. Indeed, there's something dated about such usages as the title of Meredith's *Modern Love,* or the kind of 'modern architecture' that is now called Art Deco. For Berman, modernity is an outlook – also an experience – that has permeated the world since the early 19th century. To be modern, he writes, 'is to experience personal and social life as a maelstrom, to find one's world and oneself in perpetual disintegration and renewal, trouble and anguish, ambiguity and contradiction.' But it is also, he adds, 'to make oneself somehow at home in the maelstrom.'

Berman is a professor of political science, but also a master of modern techniques of literary criticism, capable of drawing remarkable insights from an analysis of words and images. One of these images, which gives the book its title, is taken from the passage in *The Communist Manifesto* that portrays the pulverising assault of capitalism on 'all fixed, fast-frozen relations, with their train of ancient and venerable prejudices and opinions'. Marx and Engels almost seem to be singing the praises of the achievement of the bourgeoisie, and a decade later Marx also hailed the shattering of the backward 'Hindoo' world of stagnation and superstition, a view that hardly commends itself to Marxists of our time.

But, since the aim of the *Manifesto* was to show up the bourgeois achievement as unstable and, indeed, doomed, this is a classic example of the 'ambiguity and contradiction' with which Berman is concerned. Surveying the work of 19th-century writers and thinkers, he insists again and again on the paradoxes of radical iconoclasm and nostalgia for disappearing values, visions of the ideal and cherishing of the real. Here a potent symbol is the Crystal Palace – a building of impressive scale and no solidity, fitted together in six months and catching the contemporary imagination as a sort of wonderful toy. (I suppose the Centre Beaubourg is the Crystal Palace of this century.)

A German observer, Bucher, gazed along the vistas of glass at 'a distant background where all materiality is blended into the atmosphere'. Against the massively concrete background of 19th-century science and technology, we catch intimations of what the future held: the relativity theory; the uncertainty principle; invisible particles; laser beams; messages beamed from satellites. And, in the aesthetic sphere, dadaism, surrealism, *Finnegans Wake, Happy Days.* All of which, Berman would say, represents the endless striving to make oneself at home in the maelstrom of modernity.

A dedicated modern, Berman states as his aim: 'to bring the dynamic and dialectical modernism of the 19th century to life again.' This he certainly does, but he's less successful – inevitably – in explaining how a renewal of this spirit could resolve our present discontents. Marx lived in a time when capitalism really was expansive and creative. His call to arms – a call to carry forward this progress by overcoming its hampering social contradictions – isn't readily adaptable to an age when expansion has stalled. As Berman writes in a moving lament for the Bronx of his boyhood, a perverted modernity has destroyed 'everything most vital and beautiful in the modern world itself'.

I wish that Berman, who devotes much space to Czarist Russia as a case of 'modernism within underdevelopment', hadn't simply dismissed the Soviet regime as a 'despotic, inquisitorial' throwback to Ivan the Terrible. Peter the Great is an apter precedent, and surely the Russia of the Five Year Plans and the disastrous collectivisation, of the Sputniks and the Gulag, is the supreme illustration of the contradictions of modernity. It's curious that Berman gives a more understanding and balanced portrait of Robert Moses (the dictator of planning who gave New York the blessings of parks and beaches, then the ravages of expressways) than of Stalin, a similar figure on a greater stage.

I also wish that Berman had extended his description of 'modernism within underdevelopment' to the Third World, whose contrasts are the most glaring of all and in some ways the most complex. He has eloquently evoked the 19th-century street – the Boulevard Haussmann, the Nevsky Prospekt – as an arena of contact and sometimes confrontation between rich and poor, where the strolling profiteer or bureaucrat met the overworked clerk, the beggar and the prostitute. Today, the street that continues this drama in all its fascination is Chowringee, in Calcutta.

I see that I'm asking for several more chapters of this enlightening and valuable book. I shouldn't mind at all. □

Among this week's contributors:

BERNARD CRICK is Professor of Politics at Birkbeck College. His books include *George Orwell: A Life* (1980).

MERVYN JONES is a novelist of mixed Welsh and Jewish descent. His last novel, *Two Women and Their Man,* was about the Welsh and he is now working on a novel about the Jews.

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Required Writing: Miscellaneous Pieces 1955-1982

PHILIP LARKIN *Faber* £4.95

In the foreword to this gathering of assorted prose, Philip Larkin implies, no doubt justifiably, that interest in the 'literary assignments' included here has hitherto been directed at their author rather than their subjects. Probably, this will be the fate of *Required Writing* as a whole, particularly as self-exposure abounds in its pages. There are straightforward reminiscences, fragments of intellectual autobiography, interviews. Furthermore, Larkin's book and jazz reviews (the latter postdating *All What Jazz*) are invariably laced with his personality. This might be expected of Larkin on personal favourites like Hardy, Betjeman and Barbara Pym; but it is equally true of him on such disparate subjects as Francis Thompson, Cole Porter and schoolchildren's rhymes. His self-exposures are mostly overt acts – as when, writing of Tennyson, he brings in his distaste for Spenser, Milton and Pound ('unreadable'), contemporary academia, and the unions – but they can occur accidentally. A tiny revelation, for instance, lies in the fact that Larkin has read enough whodunits by the prolific Gladys Mitchell to be able to generalise about her work. Assuredly, no reader of *Required Writing* will remain unaware of Larkin's trenchant, usually negative, opinions on life and art: his love of jazz and detective novels, his belief in Victorian values, his antipathy towards children, marriage, modernism (incarnated in the devilish trinity of Pound, Parker and Picasso), poetry readings, all forms of 'subsidised' writing.

But this volume should not simply be considered a source-book for Larkin critics. Many of Larkin's book reviews (the jazz reviews are disappointing) would repay attention, despite the occasional obtrusion of his somewhat unattractive personality, were he a reviewer and nothing more. Larkin is predictably sagacious about certain writers – on Betjeman and Hardy especially so – but also, less predictably, on poets like Plath, Emily Dickinson and Stevie Smith. At times, he can even stimulate interest in subjects – the poetry of William Barnes, say – that the reader cares little about.

David Montrose

Eight Feet in the Andes

DERVLA MURPHY *John Murray* £9.95

Dervla Murphy, her ten-year-old daughter Rachel and an affectionate mule called Juana own the eight feet. In 1978, they followed the Camino Real: the Royal road through the Inca Empire which Pizarro took in 1533, arriving in Cuzco to conquer, with a couple of hundred ruffians, a civilisation of twenty million people. Since then, that high and desolate terrain has had the faces of its inhabitants ground systematically into the mud and rock of some of the most startling landscape in the world.

It is not a simple adventure, then, to follow in the footsteps of Pizarro. And Peruvian Indians are not going to fall over themselves to welcome a *gringa*, however winsome her *gringita* and however *bonite* (but not *bonito*, as Ms Murphy mistakes) her *mula*. Peruvian Indians are frightened, hungry and deeply, deeply suspicious, from a history which has been nothing but beatings. Dervla Murphy seems unable to appreciate this.

Despite her noting of the history, observation of the bad conditions in a mining town, realisation that there is absolutely no surplus food for sale in the rural *puna* and reproduction of the impassioned speech of an articulate, educated Indian, she is continally complaining about the passivity of the Indians in her travel diary. Most particularly, she is miffed that they are not more excited about *her*. Though she does recognise many touching acts of kindness, she still feels cold-shouldered when peasants don't rush out to stare at her.

This silliness does not entirely mar the interest of Ms Murphy's journey. She is a brave woman, and her daughter remarkable. If her descriptions of landscape in the end pall, whose do not? If her thoughts on life are not the most profound, we can sympathise with that. Her depictions of human incidents are vivid and appealing, her candour about herself honourable. But history's rage has frozen too much blood along Pizarro's tracks. You cannot write Ms Murphy's sort of jolly book about South America.

Victoria Neumark

Doomsday: Britain after Nuclear Attack

STAN OPENSHAW, PHILIP STEADMAN and OWEN GREENE *Blackwell* £15.50 & £4.95

Whitehall theoreticians do not enjoy actually confronting the issues of what nuclear war may do to these tiny, densely populated islands. *Doomsday* is not another polemic directed against nuclear weapons; it simply sets out clinically and clearly, with the aid of substantial computer calculations, what the Bomb (or some hundred Megatons' worth) would *do*. In this objective look at the risks of nuclear deterrence, even a mild level of attack is shown to be likely to wipe out 80 per cent of the population – merely in the short term. These are facts Whitehall will not provide to the public.

Duncan Campbell

And Night Fell: Memoirs of a Political Prisoner in South Africa

MOLEFE PHETO *Allison & Busby* £8.95

What goes on in the South African prisons goes mainly unreported because of the laws of that country that have made publication of such material inside the Republic illegal. So, Molefe Pheto has had to travel more than 6,000 miles into exile in this country before he could publish these memoirs. Pheto, a Soweto music teacher, was whisked away from his house and family one early morning in 1975. He did not know what his offences were or what his destination was. There followed 281 frightening days in detention (of which 271 were in solitary), during which he was abused by his interrogators: he was beaten up and had a rib injured, made to stand for hours while his captors changed working shifts on him and insults were hurled at him.

Pheto's account is penetrating, touching and down-to-earth honest. His memory is incredible. His interrogators were not only beastly but also stupid, forcing him at one stage into making an admission that he belonged to two liberation movements which even a political imbecile would have known to be to practically impossible because of the movements' conflicting ideologies. The number of names that Pheto has to admit knowing makes mockery of the South African interrogation and one wonders why they still bother questioning people instead of preparing a statement first and then bringing in the detainee to sign it.

Although Pheto was found not guilty of the laughable offence he was charged with, he does not make himself out to be a hero of the situation. Indeed, he tells us that he was one of the lucky ones: some have been subjected to worse treatment and torture, and others have died without having a chance to relate to the world what went on in John Vorster Square.

The only flaw in Pheto's account is that it borders on political sectarianism in some parts. Of course, Pheto was a member of the Black Consciousness Movement and had sympathies with the Pan African Congress, but his treatment of the African National Congress is negative and he seems unable to grasp the new strategies and tactics of the movement.

Wiseman Khuzwayo

Etty: A Diary 1941-43

ETTY HILLESUM *Cape* £8.50

A member of the isolated Jewish community in Amsterdam, Etty Hillesum kept a diary during the years 1941-43 in a few rough note-books. Trapped and increasingly persecuted, the Dutch Jews there managed to survive until the transports took them to a worse fate: first Westerbork, then Auschwitz, where Etty herself perished.

Her diary is yet another forceful indictment of ruthless Nazi terror. Her voice is one more condemning testimony of Hitler's outrage against humanity. She depicts regrettably familiar scenes of this period which lose none of their horror by repetition, 'more arrests, more terror, concentration camps, the arbitrary dragging off of fathers, sisters, brothers'. Trains arrive at, and depart from, the Westerbork transit camp. 'The misery here is indescribable, 70 people to a sealed wagon'. As she comments, 'We are being hunted to death right through Europe'. At Westerbork and in the trucks people die of broken spirits.

Etty's spirit never gave way. Her writing is infused with a remarkable faith and confidence in God and humanity. Her one firm, unyielding censure is for the Jewish collaborators, those who, on the Jewish Council, helped the Nazis administer the transportation. Elsewhere, she rejects condemnation of the ordinary German soldier and affirms, 'We shan't get anywhere with hatred'. Her prevailing attitude is summed up in this entry: 'Never give up, never escape, take everything in, and perhaps suffer, that's not too awful either, but never, never give up.'

Brian Martin

Handbooks

A brief mention of four recently updated practical paperbacks of special interest to NS readers. Two from the Child Poverty Action Group of use to everyone in receipt of any kind of welfare benefit, to claimants' groups, social workers, CABs etc.: **Rights Guide to Non-Means Tested Social Security Benefits** (sixth edition) by Roger Smith and **National Welfare Benefits Handbook** (thirteenth edition) by Janet Allbeson and John Douglas. Each of these clear, complete guides costs £3. Pluto Press's **Rights at Work: A Worker's Guide to Employment Law** by Jeremy McMullen has now been revised to include new legislation since the first edition came out in 1978. It sets you back £6.95, but provides 500 pages of vital information for trade unionists, shop stewards, workers generally. Pluto's **World View 1984**, the English version of the annual multi-lingual publication, contains £7.95-worth of close-packed maps, tables, articles about areas and issues, chronologies and bibliographies. ■

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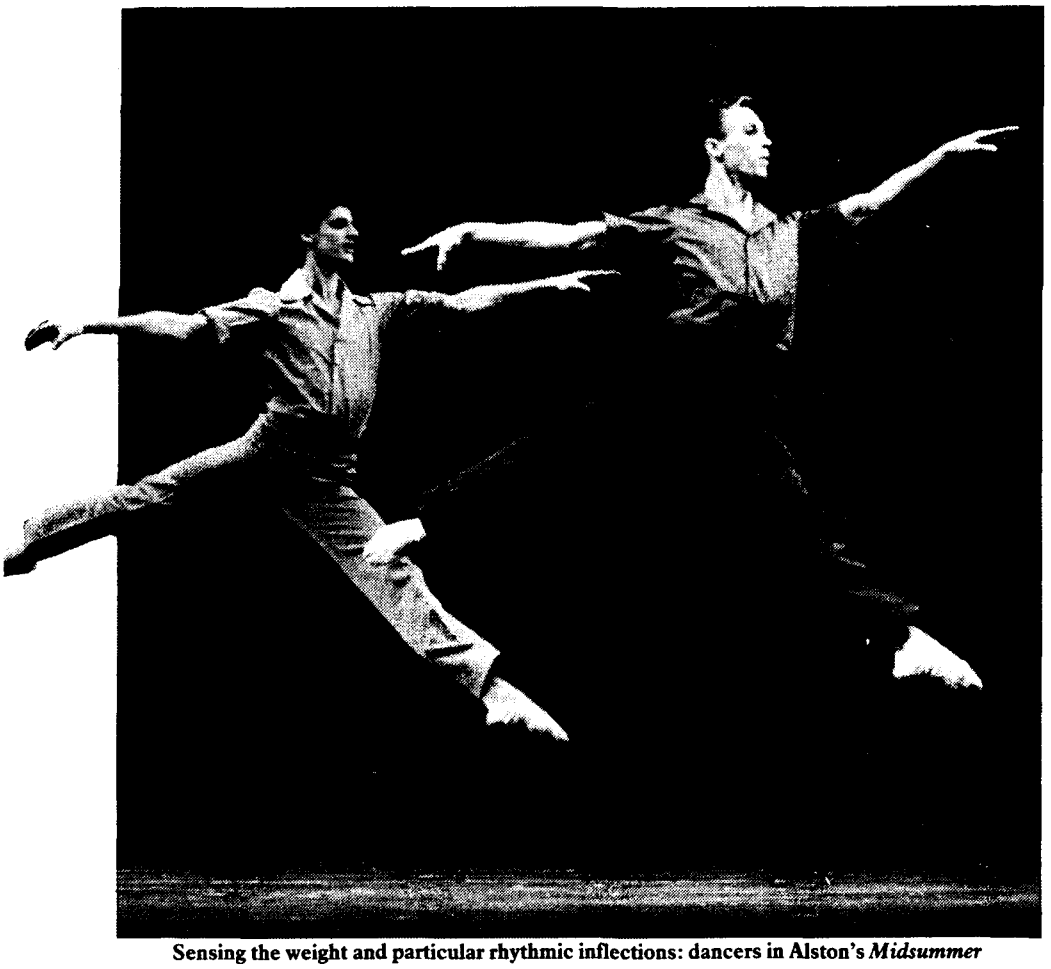
DANCE
Stephanie Jordan

Curve and arc



Sensing the weight and particular rhythmic inflections: dancers in Alston's *Midsummer*

Royal Ballet
Covent Garden
Twyla Tharp
Sadler's Wells

If it is merely unusual to have two premières by young British choreographers on a Royal Ballet programme, the commission of a work from a young choreographer out of modern dance is unprecedented. Richard Alston's interests may have been shifting towards ballet for some time, but the greater part of his career has been devoted to the development of a distinctive voice in modern dance.

Midsummer is his setting of Sir Michael Tippett's *Fantasia Concertante on a Theme of Corelli,* a warm chamber ballet for 12 younger dancers dressed in hues of varying degrees of subtlety, picked out from John Hubbard's riot-of-colour landscape. Responding to musical structure, Alston has cast a ruminative solo for Ashley Page, a duet with Fiona Chadwick, a smooth succession of group numbers, at one time the men in individual solos springing out of their group, at another, some gathering stability in unison couples. Bryony Brind and the newcomer Jonathan Cope are introduced and later given a long, intimate duet, the heart of the ballet. The rate of ideas is finely judged, except perhaps the coda, dictated by the score's return to Corellian baroque, an abrupt gathering of forces that hardly has the time to establish itself. Brind's duet with Cope is a tribute to her featheriness and lyricism, languor and romantic delight controlled by clear placement of steps, *fondu* indulged, little ornaments with the leg to grace a singing upbeat and fineness of touch.

At the première, some of the group work looked staid, a rather understated account of the music's rapturous billows and gusts, but already, remarkably quickly, many of the dancers have relaxed into Alston's curves and arcs, sensing the weight and particular rhythmic inflections of a new style.

Indeed, Alston brings out a humanity in the dancers which the other choreographers on the programme do not, either MacMillan, whose **Requiem,** with its impressive tableaux of lifts, consistently denudes the sleek dancerly body of any personality; or Bintley, whose new **Consort Lessons** rides zestfully across Stravinsky's *Concerto for piano and wind instruments:* clever, but ultimately weak on information about dancers or dance.

YOU CANNOT criticise any of Twyla Tharp's work for casual commitment. During its one-week season at Sadler's Wells, the 17-strong company has displayed the abundant dynamism and invention that emerges only from the best American dance companies. **Untitled** is far away from the fun reference to social dancing or the off-hand virtuosity that has endeared Tharp to a wide public; here the dancers are both tough super-people, in their black, sporty shorts and shirts, and hopeless driven creatures compelled to match up to David Van Tieghem's strident percussion/synthesiser score, motor energy constantly recharged. And so they throb, Tharp and her 16. They may be threatening in their long lines and unison phalanxes, defiant in wide-legged stance, but the routines are peppered with spasmodic jerks and robotic twitches, expressions turn into grimaces, shoulders are hiked up painfully. Figures enter and dissolve time and time again into an infinity of gloom backstage. It is hard to pin down a precise statement beyond its being a masterfully organised symbol of menace and aggression. Only Tharp herself seems able to preserve individuality. Diminutive, loopy and shakey on her pins, both victim and object of acclaim, she at least can melt, cling and admit to social needs. Perennial outsider and heroine, she is the last to head for final oblivion.

Tharp's other world première is her relief, her version of the *ballet blanc,* the pure white dance to music, to Telemann, with soft, casual outfits for the men and what look like versions of dressy lingerie for the women. The six dancers as sextet, couples or solos against the group make considerable reference to ballet vocabulary, but with characteristic Tharpian eccentricity. She might lapse into her more familiar style, or rush into speeds not at all suggested by the music or, in the opening movement, there is the oddity of the men branching off into dizzy virtuosity while their partners blithely continue, serene and regular as the music. Mild parody this seems at first, yet there are later passages in which parody is expressed vaguely. The fact that a couple of the dancers do not execute ballet line or turn-out convincingly (leg-revealing costumes demand that they do), blurs the issue further.

However, **Nine Sinatra Songs** brings out the dancers' unmatched elegance and rythmic acuity. Six ballroom pairs show their stuff in turn and, to *My Way,* in statutory couple ensembles. Conventional trappings, but the choreographer managed to make each turn entirely distinctive, plain, romantic enjoyment, Latin craziness or the raunchy, streetwise 'modern' section. Most remarkable portrait of all is the sleazy, closing-time number for John Carrafa and Sara Rudner. A sleepy, tipsy seductress, she hangs on, straddles, clambers over him, might well find herself floored, bottom-upwards, but ultimately, all grace comes out of awkwardness and, clearly, they get along.

The whole work is a metaphor for modes of compatibility. It glows. Tharp's genuine affection for Sintra's celebrated 'phrasing' is apparent and for her superb dancers. She makes a point of showing each couple taking their final leave in complete harmony. □

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FILMS
John Coleman

Mind out

Brainstorm (15)
Empire
Krull (PG)
Odeon, Leicester Square
The Lift (15)
Warner

Orwell's *1984* is already getting the media treatment from all over but most people would agree that a novel written way back in 1932, Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*, has proved the more balefully prophetic with its emphasis on psychological conditioning through drugs and pleasure-bribes. It even forecast 'feelies', totally tactile movie experiences where the spectator became magical participant, and surely the unacknowledged source of Douglas Trumbull's ill-fated **Brainstorm:** we were here, on the page, some 50 years ago. So even if this project hadn't run into such problems as the sad death of one of its co-stars, Natalie Wood, before several of her key-scenes had been shot, and MGM's subsequent off-on vacillations, Trumbull's moral tale would have needed to be as well knit and dazzling as the Huxley to sustain intellectual interest. Visual dazzle of a mild kind there is, to be expected from the Trumbull who oversaw the special effects for *Close Encounters, Star Trek: The Motion Picture* and *Blade Runner:* what there is not is the charm and relative coherence of the Trumbull who once directed (and wrote) the attractive *Silent Running*.

Christopher Walken and Louise Fletcher have made a huge and hazardous technological breakthrough. By donning a gadget-sown helmet – progressively streamlined by Walker's estranged wife, designer Natalie Wood – anyone can comprehensively tune in to playbacks of another's sensory experience, whether it be savouring an emetic jumble of foodstuffs (comic touch) or being screwed out of his wits by a straddling beauty (box-office touch). The latter happening, oddly enough, is presented chillingly yet leaves the experiencer taking early retirement, beaming 'I'm more than I was' like some Born-Again nutter. As the corporate boss, Cliff Robertson first demonstrates the device to an executive boardroom, when the screen expands to take us through a disappointing re-run of tired old Cinerama gimmicks (rollercoaster, bobsleigh ride, surfing, travelogue helicoptering), but is soon letting in a military observer and, in fact, a host of bureaucratic baddies who spot the invention's brainwashing potential. Meanwhile, Walken has recorded a tape of his feelings about his wife (soap-opera scraps of great past moments), which brings her back to his arms, and Ms Fletcher has taped her own death, which ostensibly gets Walken – avid to inhale it – debarred from the lab. From then on, it's high-tech war, with Walken, Wood and that sex-retired programmer bemusingly outwitting the forces of evil.

Trumbull intended this whole outing to illustrate his new, speedy, high-definition widescreen process of 'Showscan' and all too clearly gave less than a monkey's about thinking through its central business of, in effect and not just via effects, *becoming* someone else.

Peter Yates's big-budget **Krull,** another of those unwise excursions into the sword-and-sorcery game, tries terribly hard to ingratiate itself – not too gory, a saucy little princess, a fool whose spells turn *him* into various animals, super Freddie Jones as a sage – and only comes up with an insensate cobbling together of mock-myth, fairy-tale, S-F and – of course – oodles of special effects. Beauty and the Beast, a quest, that hoary old canard *amor vincit omnia* are wooden-spooned into this pudding, overcooked at two hours, which offers indigestion of the imagination as its reward. Broadswords clash with android-aimed lasers, poker-work speeches with cockney throwaways, Daliesque interiors with Arthurian locations. Bernard Bresslaw, as a *nice* Cyclops, keeps his eye on proceedings. Which are, after all, preferable to those in a monstrously dubbed Dutch cheese, **The Lift,** a would-be horror-flick set largely in the office block where an elevator, interfered with by a micro-chip, has its murderous ups-and-downs. What if some of us *did* use the stairs from the fifth-floor viewing theatre afterwards? □

TELEVISION
Hugo Williams

So sad

FOR WEEKS now the wonderful **Fragile Earth** series (C4) has been squeezed out of this column by the demands of coarser-grained stuff, the same process which caused such precious corners of the earth to come under threat in the first place: a quick laugh, a quick vote, a quick buck.

Most recent in the series was a film on the Pantanal, a marshy prairie in central Brazil, now threatened by the beef business, where capybaras and tapirs pursue their off-beat lifestyles and giant anacondas 'move effortlessly through the wetlands'. Much like human beings, the male and female snail-kite are rivals for territory, although the male is dominant. Could *The Worst of Hollywood* match the sight of a giant cayman alligator – 12ft long, 500 lbs, 50 years old – crunching a live spider crab in teeth that have grown up through its nostrils? The dressy giant ant-eater appears to be wearing Western-style chaps. A harmless, a colourful fellow, he is apparently due for the knackers.

Fragile Earth is a far cry from the old Jacques Cousteau bug-show with its anthropomorphic, 'Soddenly ze killair-shark darts out from he's hiding place in ze shadows . . .' but it's not above the odd snooty value judgment when the animal concerned is too small to defend itself: 'The strange-looking elephant shrew with its permanently twitching elongated snout is one of the Kalahari's most primitive mammals . . .' The temperature in this hot-spot rises to an 'intolerable' 150f., at which point we learn that heat music is not unlike freezing cold music: a high-pitched zinging noise. 'Quite suddenly in the hostile river valley the acacias flower', and heat music is followed by flowering valley music (orchestral).

How American women would envy the female hyena having a clitoris and mock scrotum the same size as the male's genitals, though perhaps they don't have to. One must agree that 'examining each other's hindquarters is a safer method of getting to know one another than the unpredictable front end with its powerful locking jaws'.

My favourite character-animal in the Amazonian rain-forest sequence was the giant sloth, whose unique acting style owes something to the 'method' school. He waits until the very last minute to do whatever it is he is going to do, then auspiciously refrains. Instead, every three days, he moves with immense care (and the help of many cuts) to the base of his banyan tree, where he takes a long and complicated shit, in slow motion. The species of moth which lives on the sloth's hedge-like coat, feeding on the algae that grow on its permanently damp surface, has plenty of time to lay its eggs on the sloth's elegant droppings and jump back on board again prior to the leisurely ride skywards: an enviable lifestyle.

In the mangrove swamp of Borneo, evolution is at its most flashy and improvisatory. Fish live on land. Trees breathe through their roots. Archer-fish shoot down dragonflies with jets of water and a caterpillar can spin a balloon of air, complete with larder, in which to survive the tidal inundations. Yellow-banded cat-snakes raid heron nests. Carnivorous mud skippers prey on one-clawed fiddler crabs. Weaver ants kidnap anything moving except a suction beetle that can glue itself to the ground. The only civilised creature in this doubtful picnic spot is the proboscis monkey, a red-haired endomorph with a large, pendulous, ski-jump nose, enormous stomach and equivocal expression. There were some wonderful shots of these creatures piggy-backing their young across a river like vague holiday-makers, holding their delicate, limp, hairless hands clear of the water as if to dry their nail varnish.

'Are they real, or is it a toy, Daddy?' children of the future will ask as these images of the last Edens flicker implausibly before their eyes. But Daddy won't know any more. He will look in wonder at the pygmy chameleon with its gentle, independently-revolving eye-balls and assume it is a cartoon. This animal survived the ice-age in

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Korup, the rain-forest of Cameroun, but even if it survives man's keen business sense in our century, it won't be around after the intriguing 'nuclear winter' our leaders are fixing to contribute to our enjoyment of the natural world, although the leaders will be of course. 'The forest behaves as a single organism,' this film will remind them. 'The great trees, which sit on the forest floor, supported by vast buttresses, their roots only a few inches below the surface leaf litter, are a framework for a carefully balanced community . . .' But the scaly tree-pangalin, the rare drills who scout the forest floor in noisy bands, the pygmy flying-squirrels weighing less than an ounce, these will be as Donald Duck to the survivors, if any. The rain forest will probably be gone in 30 years, not just upset. With the disappearance of half the species on earth, flora and fauna, the whole process of evolution, our own included, will be irredeemably doomed and such of us as remain will be cast out of this Eden to wander the draughty corridors of space, our videos strapped to our foreheads like crosses. 'It is intensely sad.'

We were all tucked up in bed at the *New Statesman* before the Christmas decline set in, so I am unable to comment on the seasonal breakdown of our domestic ecosystems except to say that the quickie consumer guide to the big store Father Christmasses offered by *Sixty Minutes* (BBC1) looked about par for the course. 'The D. H. Evans one kept his glasses on,' whined a mini-researcher. 'He looked silly.' □

THEATRE
Christopher Edwards

In the telling

The Unseen Hand
SAM SHEPARD *Bridge Lane Theatre*
Cinderella
Lyttelton

Sam Shepard's plays are often performed in London, although not always in a manner that does justice to the texts. Unquestionably the best staging of any of his many plays was the excellent, and inexplicably shortlived, production of *Buried Child* at the Hampstead Theatre several years ago: a realistic and in many respects European work written just after Shepard stopped writing the satiric fantasies which, in America at any rate, had made him famous. I actually prefer the later plays but judging by the revivals of his work over the last few years, it is precisely these earlier pieces – the ones based upon popular mythological types such as the cowboys, rock stars or sports champions – which continue to attract the large following he has built up in this country.

Shepard has written enduring drama; he is someone worth taking seriously and if he can be persuaded to return from the movies (where he performs with success as an actor) the theatre will profit again from his originality and talent. The work staged here – from the early category of fantasies – is beautifully constructed, clever, funny and superbly produced by a newly formed international touring company which calls itself 'The Taxi'.

Francesca Boyd's junkyard set is dominated by a derelict pink 1951 Chevrolet. A cloud of tobacco smoke rising from the back seat announces the immoveable presence of Blue Morphan – a cowboy juicer on the way out who, while pretending to be a hitch-hiker on the open road, never in fact moves from the site. Thanks to modern medicine he is 120 years old, the last surviving member of the Morphan Brothers' gang. A futuristic punk from outer space called Willie drops by: silver garb, cropped hair and a terrible scar on his scalp marking, he alleges, the passage of a hand burned into his skull by truant rulers of his planet to prevent his thoughts from exceeding permitted boundaries. He has come to ask the Morphan Brothers to save his people, *à la* Magnificent Seven. Willie gives Blue back his youth, and resurrects Cisco and Sycamore – the latter arriving in a striking supernatural version of the classic saloon bar entry; lit from behind and swirling in smoke, he shoulders his way through swing doors cunningly set into an old advertising board. Last to arrive is The Kid, a High School Cheer Leader who has been whipped and humiliated by the school team after a night out, their way of recognising that he is an unhunky wimp.

The Kid holds the key; Sycamore wants to plug him full of lead when he catches him eavesdropping on their plan to liberate Willie's planet. The Kid, though, has them bewitched as he delivers a sort of prize classroom analysis of guerrilla warfare, filling the Morphan Brothers in on developments since the hey-day of their bank jobs. Above all, he says, trust no one, then promptly kicks Sycamore in the crutch, takes the gun and threatens to hand them all in under the mistaken impression that it is *his* dear bit of old America they plan to overrun. The Kid, every bit a wimp but characteristic of a certain kind of closed mentality, then delivers a classic Shepardian monologue on why he loves his hometown, and his mom, reducing the Brothers and the audience to tearful hysterics, and pinpointing the theme of the piece which I suppose you could summarise as mental bondage and the *internal* agency that was actually terrorising Willie's brain. It is this that paralyses The Kid and that we see closing in on Sycamore as he declines his brother's invitation to break out, electing instead to inherit the defeatist mantle of the ancient Blue we saw at the start – life as a denizen of an immobile Chevrolet. As a stab at existentialist philosophy none of this is at all remarkable, the beauty is all in the tautly projected *telling*. Avoid the pantomimes and risk a trip to the Bridge Lane Theatre, Battersea.

Certainly I couldn't urge anyone to rush to the South Bank to see **Cinderella**, the most lavish but least alive of all the pantomimes on offer in London. William Dudley's sets, it must be said, are breathtakingly lovely; a winter scene transforming itself into summer, a soaring palatial staircase, an enormous brown kitchen with giant painted saucepans etc. The transformation is effected neatly too; Cinderella seems still to be dancing with the Beatrix Potter mice when hey presto she appears in dazzling white in a silver carriage pulled by *real* ponies. But by then no one was in much of a mood to utter an 'Oooh' because, despite the authenticity of the Victorian fairy tale, the production appeared to have lost sight of any sense of itself as a live entertainment involving you as participant as well as spectator. I can't understand what access of dotty scruple persuaded the committee credited with adapting this piece to restrict the humour to a few rude noises and the very occasional groan pun. Most of the text consists of rhyming couplets delivered straight, the pace is funereal and the cast seems unsure whether it should try a bit harder to amuse. Janet Dibley's Cinderella sings exquisitely, James Grant's Demon Dour does his Scottish best to give us some fun, but the evening falls flat on its beautiful back. □

WEEKEND COMPETITION

No 2802 **Set by E. O. Parrott**

Lizzie Borden took an axe
And gave her father forty whacks;
When she saw what she had done,
She gave her mother forty-one.

A neat way of describing a famous crime. Can we have similar retellings of crimes or other events of the twentieth century? Four lines (natch), by 13 January.

No 2799 **Set by Pat Blackford**

Pantomime extracts performed by Tory MPs, Comp Complex staff or Booker judges and shortlisted authors.

Report **By Jeff Squiffy**

This is the last comp to be judged by me before I go off on sabbatical to complete my next book (working title: *Susan Sontag as Metaphor*), and it's a goodie. Some of you (Ransome-Davies, to name names) shamelessly ignored the 150-word limit but, in this season of giving, I decided to let it pass. Just don't try it again: this is *not* a precedent. *Dix rectangles verts* for each successful funster.

(Enter Len the unlucky dressed as Tiny Tim – pathetic, starved, humble.)
LTU: I am the Christmas Spirit, as you see:
The festive ghost of 1983,
When monstrous scandals happened at the
Staggers –
(He stops as he sees PC 49 enter, then resumes on a different tack.)
Hello. A cop's arrived. He's looking daggers.
You'll pardon me. I'm off. I haven't been well.
My arse is sore. I think it's down to Greenwell.
PC 49: Now now. Enough of that. This time of
year
My sergeant calls the Season of Good Cheer.
And so we'll have no more of your malarky.
(Exit Len.)
I'll bet the bugger's father was a darkie.
Remember now, don't get me wrong, straight
up,

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This Complex number is a poisoned cup.
No bunce, no earners, times could not be leaner –

(Suddenly alert.)

Oh Christ! Oh fucking Christ! It's Ms de Meaner!

(But it isn't. It's the Lemon Kid in drag. Exit PC 49.)

TLK: Zowie! Pow! Bam! It's Christmas. Don't let's ration

Our homage to the babe divine called Fashion.

(He explodes in a colourful cloud of narcotic smoke. When it clears, Herself is onstage.)

MdM: Let's get things straight, OK? This bloody Christ

Mas ritual is simply chauvinist.
It's man-made celebration. What I mean is,
That little bastard Jesus had a penis.
But what's a prick? When all is said and done,
We all are here. God bless us, every one.

(The entire Comp Complex staff wobble on to the stage and together sing 'I Shall Be Released'.)

'SMASHER' RANSOME-DAVIES

(An embarrassed-looking figure shambles onstage)

The History Man: Hello again, children! Herrhem . . . Well, the winner is . . . (fumbles with papers) . . . er, me! Oh, shome mistake, surely? Er . . .

(From a puff of smoke emerges a glittering beauty in thigh-length boots)

Selina: I am the Good Fairy Selina! *(cheers)*. What this show needs is professionalism! *(more cheers)*. Now, boys and girls . . . The back the bookie bickers bocked, oops, sorry, er . . . The book the Booker bookies backed, super Graham Swift's *Waterland*, is . . . NOT the winner *(laughter)*. The absolutely dishy Salman Rushdie has . . . not won either *(cries of 'Shame!')*

(Simple Simon Winchester hands her an envelope) Um, in fact the award goes to . . . oh gosh! *(she peers myopically at the card)*. Er, to a Mr Cot . . . Coot . . . or . . .

Simon: Coetzee, you fool, Coetzee!

(Selina drops her knee with practised grace as the curtain falls).

PETER NORMAN

Enter Long John Squiffy

LJS: Yo-ho-ho, me 'arties! Woddis this crew of treasure-seekers a-doin'?

Len The Unlucky (a cabin-boy): Here's a rum do . . .

LJS: Rum, boy? Give old Long John a swig!

LTU: . . . why have I bin give 17,000 clerihews to check aboard by tomorrow, cap'n?

LJS: 'Cause there be a buried treasury of wit, my lad, worth a basil's ransome. An' I can't be fagged to find it, sharr!

LTU: Be that a parrott on your shoulder?

Parrott: A wellington and three newtons! A wellington and three newtons!

LJS: It be! I calls 'im E.O., 'cause 'e owes us his fame in this world.

LTU: Tell me, cap'n, why be you such a singular long-john, when they do come in pairs?

LJS: Because I be legless, lad, aharr, such a deal o' the time. 'Tis on account of my a-moving to this bright new vessel moored in Farringdon Lane. 'Tis what they calls a Superiority Complex.

WILL BELLENGER

Sir Ian: Viscount Whitelaw's having a ball in the Upper House!

Carrington: But *you* can't go, Tebbers – you have to do the dirty work with oiks like Norman Fowler.

(They exit, giggling aristocratically)

Teberella: (bursting into tears) Oh, what shall I do? I *so* want to be a High Tory and wear beautiful clothes.

(Enter the Godmother)

Godmother: Fear not, Tebbers. I've turned those snobs into pumpkins. Listen – old Fly Buttons has got himself into trouble, so I need a new Prince Charming. Try on this pinstripe suit.

Teberella: It fits! It fits!

Godmother: So you *shall* go to the ball. Just one thing – it's back by midnight, or you get the old stake through the heart, understand? Remember – Unlucky Jim Prior tried to mess with . . . The Godmother!

(She exits to a crescendo of hisses)

A. HARRADEN

Dame/Structuralist Critic: Now, children, this new book by Norman McBragg is called *Glug*. It's all about the secret life of the Natterjack toad. But we all know it's an allegory of non-verbal communication in an electronic culture – don't we, boys and girls?

Chorus of Middle-Aged Publishers: Oh no we don't!

Chorus of Semioticians: Oh yes we do!

Selina Scott: Is that the publisher there in the green cummerbund?

Reactionary Critic: I like books that have a beginning, a middle and an end.

Dame: Oooh! Off with you. At least it's not set in Hampstead. Now, boys and girls, have any of you seen the Booker Prize judges? What? They're sloping off to the bar because they can't face being interviewed by Selina Scott? I don't believe it. *(Frenzied yells.)* The chairperson of the panel is giving a lecture on deconstruction? Now children, you really *are* pulling my leg. I can see only a roomful of semi-inebriated freeloaders muttering that the whole thing's been rigged. Aaaargh! Here's Simon Winchester *(exit pursued by book show host riding on pantomime horse)*.

NICHOLAS MURRAY

FIRST PERSON

Anne Smith

Crystal balls

I KEEP COMING across all sorts of odd ads tucked away in the corners of otherwise quite sane publications. Recently, for example, feeling balked by the shortage of book reviews in the *NS*, I finally gave in and read the ad. for Madame Blavatsky.

She is not, as I had casually supposed when catching her name in previous issues, the keeper of a peculiarly ferocious Russian brothel, nor even a fortune teller lately escaped from the back pages of *Harper's*. Which is just as well, for I have a thing about fortune tellers, having stirred one up in my adolescence. That particular specimen of the genre invited me to cross her palm with silver, promising to tell me afterwards whether or not I would marry Elvis Presley.

I grudgingly handed over my last sixpence. The clairvoyant looked from it to me in incredulous disgust. 'You did say silver, didn't you?' I challenged. 'Eez no' enough,' she growled, cut to the quick that I should place such a low value upon her prophetic abilities – after all, it did say outside the booth that she was a consultant of the famous. (Did the Duke of Edinburgh hand her a mere *tanner?* she implied). 'Well, how much do you want?' I snapped back, purely from curiosity. A shilling it seems was the very least she could take for revealing my destiny. 'Och tae hell wi' that!' I advised her, with the diplomacy for which I am rightly famous among my friends.

I couldn't make out what she mumbled at my departing back, but my sister, who was with me at the time and 'mortified', she said, told me: 'That's it! Ye've done it noo! That's the gypsy's curse on ye!' Pausing only to curse the gypsy back, I went and had a turn on the waltzers instead. Well, as all the world knows, I never did marry Elvis Presley – and a good thing too, by all accounts.

This little incident had vanished from our minds when, years later, my sister turned up at my house urging me to go up town to a Spiritualist Fair, where a 'really accurate' medium had told her fortune. I asked her in my sceptical way how she knew he was accurate if it was her future he was predicting, but she had an answer to that. It appears he had told her that our Granny in heaven was looking after her, and she just *knew* it was true, and I *must* go too for it's a guid feelin' to know your dead Granny still cares . . .

Knowing my grandmother better than this – if she ever communicates she'll do it direct; she never had any time for entrepreneurs – I begged leave to doubt it, but, for the sake of our shaky relationship, I held my tongue and tried to enter into the spirit (sorry) of the thing. Handing over a reluctant pound to a female of benevolent aspect (she probably had a Granny too) who sat outside the booths for the express purpose of relieving the credulous of their worldly baggage before they entered the presence of the seer, I parted the curtain and went in.

Three minutes later, I was back at her desk, demanding a refund. Her benevolence melted and she became hard faced and stubborn, but I could shout louder than her, and once I'd begun to lecture the gathering crowd on the deficiencies of the sage behind the curtain, she saw the light and gave me my pound back. I put it towards a new copy of *1984*. It took me an hour to persuade my sister that though the medium clearly had a message for *her*, as far as I was concerned the lines to the Other World are permanently down.

I was just like our father, she reckoned. We recalled the time he had attended a seance at his cousin's house (she did it for pin-money in the same way as my mother did home perms). As his cousin moaned in her trance, some frowsy old broad in the enchanted circle got up, filled an empty lemonade bottle from the scullery tap and presented it to my father: 'I am White Hawk, your Spirit Guide,' she told him, with a perfectly straight face. 'This will cure your various(*sic*) veins . . . ' Ever after, she was known in the neighbourhood as Shitehawk. She never lived it down.

So now I ask myself, with that background, dare I answer the Madame Blavatsky ad.? I confess I'm keen to benefit from 'the searchlight of her encyclopaedic knowledge and powerful intellect' as stated. And a biographical dictionary tells me that she 'even . . . penetrated Tibet'. I wonder, do your think I was *guided* to that ad.? □

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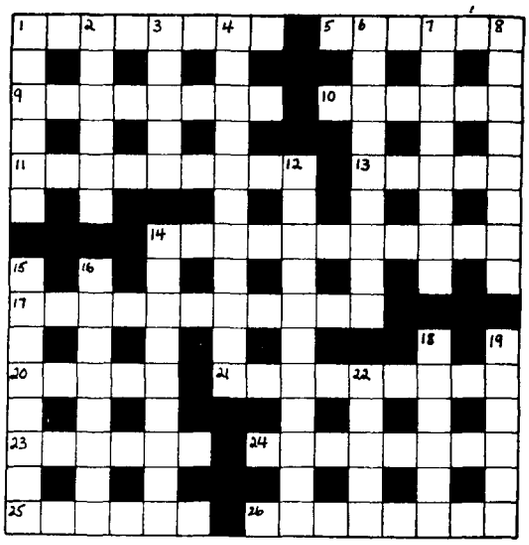
Weekend Crossword 1425

PRIZES: £5 Book Tokens for the first three correct solutions opened. Entries to Crossword 1425, New Statesman, 14-16 Farringdon Lane, London EC1R 3AU, by first post 10 January.



Name_____

Address_____

ACROSS

1. Used for experiments when the underground is on trial (8)
5. The winners have tea with the members (6)
9. If I left help again, there would be the ingredients for this party (8)
10. Glibber gabble (6)
11. Animal roused and shown disapproval (9)
13. Composer of subtle harmonies (5)
14. Mottram without a destination (11)
17. Worn by brunettes without gravity? (4,7)
20. Shed, only having a short time to last (5)
21. Eastern girl is something to have on one's shoulder (9)
23. The voice to multiply (6)
24. Omitting exercise (8)
25. If the county lost capital, it would give us an occupation for two (6)
26. Papers containing period forecasts (8)

DOWN

1. Subjects cost one penny in change (6)
2. It is crazy to put an animal in an enclosure (6)
3. One appears in something dark with a headdress (5)
4. Town which makes airman go through water (11)
6. They should provide capital with lights (9)
7. Suiting for a novel seat (8)
8. It is quite unexpected and extraordinarily super, sir! (8)
12. Cap made of darker steel (11)
14. Game trifle (9)
15. Woman with children as members of a sect (8)
16. A little bit is kept back by employers to provide garments (8)
18. Train for street fighting (6)
19. Sits on the fence or barriers of a different kind (6)
22. Moves in the manner of an antelope searching for food (5)

SETSQUARE

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IN MEMORIAM

THIS YEAR should not end without a thought for the man who 'tore the guts out of the Nazi invaders' (Churchill), STALIN, this year being the 30th anniversary of his death! – Francois and Constance Caviglioli.

LISTINGS

THURS 5 JANUARY

LONDON Adult students drop in and sample what's on offer at North London Poly. 5.30-7pm first Thursday every month. **Details: Linda Latter 607 2789 x 2014, PNL, Rm 109 Marlborough Building, Holloway Rd, N7.**

LONDON 'Non-nuclear defence strategies' Spkr Michael Randle of Alternative Defence Commission. Adm free. 8pm Tetherdown Hall, Tetherdown, Muswell Hill, N10. **Details J. Morley, Muswell Hill CND. 01-889 0571.**

FORTHCOMING

9 JAN LONDON Short practical course on: Handling the media; Producing publicity; Poster and banner design, etc. for non-professionals. 12 wk course, 1 eve per wk. Fees: £8-£12/£1 unwaged. **Enrol today at Community Education Unit, London College of Printing, Elephant and Castle, SE1. Details: Mary Chamberlain, 01-735 9100/8484 x 264.**

11 JAN LEWES Bruce Kent and Tim Rathbone MP debate 8pm Priory Lower School. **Org Lewes CND, Kate Martin Lewes 77324.**

11 JAN LONDON 'The Politics of Persuasion', Lecture Series at Dunamis, St James's, Piccadilly. 6.30pm Peter Fiddick, TV Columnist, *Guardian*, 'The Media gets the Message'. **Details: Dunamis 197 Piccadilly, London W1 01-437 6851.**

12 JAN LONDON 'Going naked into the Conference Chamber? – Britain and Nuclear Weapons' – course begins at Clapham-Battersea AEI, Bonneville Site, Bonneville Gdns, SW4. 7.30-9.30pm for six weeks. Registration today at 7pm at Bonneville. **Details: Harry Zutshi 01-675 1913 eves/01-633 9434 day.**

12 JAN-5 APRIL Employment and Training for the Future Workshops to be run by Women's Comm. Support Unit of the GLC. **Details Joan Miller 01-633 1115.**

13 JAN LONDON Gay Humanist Grp 'Notable Gay Humanists' series. Dr Stephen Coote (ed. *Penguin Book of Homosexual Verse*) on John Addington Symonds. 7.30pm Library, Conway Hall, Red Lion Sq, WC1.

14 JAN LONDON Privatisation of Britain's industries, one day conf convened by Post Office Engineering Union. 10am-4.30pm Central Hall, Westminster. **Details and credentials: Len Gillard 01-998 2981.**

16 JAN NOTTINGHAM 'Can Political Power be Morally justified?' Spkr Prof David Beetham, Univ. of Leeds. 4.15pm Social Science Bld, University of Nottingham. **Details: John Ferris for Nottingham Peace Lectures, 0602 56101 x 3377.**

17 JAN MANCHESTER 'Animal Liberation – a socialist issue?' Spkr M. Killian, Northern Animal Liberation League. 7.30pm Polytechnic Students Union, Sidney St (off Oxford Rd), Manchester 10. **Details: BSSRS, 9 Poland St, London, W1. 01-437 2728.**

17 & 19 JAN LONDON No-nonsense Economics – a down to earth exposition of how the economy works. One evening per week 7pm, either Tues. or Thurs. Fee £12 for 12-week term. **Prospectus and Details 01-834 4979. ESSRA School of Economic Studies, 177 Vauxhall Bridge Road, SW1.**

18 JAN LONDON 'Gender, health and medical care: a cross-cultural perspective'. Course organised by extra mural dept. University of London. Starts today. **Details: 01-359 4925 or Mary Ward Centre 01-831 7711 quoting course number 193UE.**

18 JAN WARWICK 'Can Law control the use of Force' Tom Campbell, Prof. of Jurisprudence, University of Glasgow. 7.30pm Arts Centre Conference Room, University of Warwick. Adm. Free.

20 JAN LONDON Housing Benefit – one year on. Conf jointly org. by Child Poverty Action Grp and SHAC. 10am-4.45pm Central Hall, Westminster. Spkrs incl Rhodes Boyson, David Donnison, Paul Burgess, Nick Raynsford. Fee £6. **Details: Alan Booth, CPAG, 1 Macklin St, WC2. 01-242 3225.**

21 JAN LONDON Unemployment Seminar for young people at County Hall, SE1. **Org. British Youth Council, 57 Chalton St, NW1. 01-387 5882.**

23 JAN NOTTINGHAM 'Protest, Power and the Peace Movement'. Spkr Conrad Lodziak, Trent Polytechnic. 7.30pm Adult Education Centre, Shakespeare St. **Details John Ferris for The Nottingham Peace Lectures 0602 56101 x 3377.**

25 JAN WARWICK 'The Relevance of Laws of War in a Nuclear Age' Spkr Adam Roberts, Reader in International Relations, University of Oxford. Adm. free 7.30pm Arts Centre Conference Rm, University of Warwick. **Details: John Dewar 0203 24011 x 2119.**

27 JAN LONDON Homelessness and the Voluntary Sector – an ARVAC Conference 10am-5pm Mary Ward Centre, 42 Queen Sq, WC1. (Closing date for applications 13 Jan). Fee £5/£6 non membs incls coffee/lunch/tea. **Details: Pat Marsden, ARVAC, 26 Queen's Rd, Wivenhoe, Essex CO7 9JH. 0206 22 5344.**

27-28 JAN LEICESTER 'Interdisciplinary Work: Problems and Progress' Foundation conf. of Interdisciplinary Assoc of Mental Health Workers at University of Leicester. Spkrs incl Prof. Anthony Clare, Prof. Kathleen Jones. Residential fee £40 (incls membership). **Details: Mrs F. Sykes, DES, University of Surrey, Guildford. 0483 571281.**

29 JAN BIRMINGHAM Concert for CND 2.30pm Birmingham Town Hall. Simon Rattle and members of Birmingham Symphony orchestra play Rossini, Mozart, Brahms. **Details: CND W. Midlands Region, 54 Allison St, Digbeth. 021-632 6909.**

3 FEB OXFORD 'The Politics of History' meeting to launch the History Workshop Centre for Social History and will be followed by celebration party. Contributions of food/drink welcome. 7.30-9.30pm Buxton Hall, Ruskin College. Spkrs incl: Christopher Hill 'History and Patriotism', Raphael Samuel 'The Role of the Individual in History'. **Details: Centre for Social History, Ruskin College Oxford OX1 2HE.**

11 FEB MANCHESTER Anti-Trident Convention Free Trade Hall. Fee £3/£1 visitors. **Details and leaflets Anti-Trident Campaign, 420 Sauchiehall St, Glasgow. 041-332 3141.**

14 FEB MANCHESTER 'Whistleblowers – what happens to scientists whose opinions don't fit their bosses' policies?' 7.30pm Polytechnic Students Union, Sidney St, (off Oxford Rd). **Details: British Society for Social Responsibility in Science, 9 Poland St, London, W1.**

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A LONER by pretence, now I'm lonely, single-parent, 35, thinking, artistic, attractive, sensitive, longs to meet a kind, kind, gentle man (for keeps!). Box 7166.

ATTRACTIVE, PROFESSIONAL man (58), divorced, loves arts, seeks attractive, intelligent, sensual, non-smoking woman, slim-medium, any race/circumstances, for warm friendship/enjoyments, preferably London/surrounding areas. Box 7108.

ATTRACTIVE, PROFESSIONAL, mature, American black woman, early 40s and world traveller, wishes to make European friends. I live/work in San Francisco area. Box 7132.

BEARDED LECTURER in Technology (45), seeks woman with an interest in far left politics, cinema and theatre. London area. Box 7248.

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FRIENDLY, PERSONABLE middle-aged man, with some commitments, would like to meet female, of premenopausal age, for friendship and the good things in life. Box 7252.

GENUINE DESCRIPTION of ideal man or woman requested from opposite sex. No name or address necessary, only age and occupation. Results analysed and, hopefully, published in NS. Box 7208.

GLOBETROTTING PROFESSIONAL, 28, attractive personality, visits London frequently, solvent but not rich, seeks interesting lady (age, looks unimportant), for friendship, outings and fun. A.L.A. Box 7257.

GOOD LOOKING, genuine woman, would like to meet interesting, witty (as she is sometimes) man in 50-60 age bracket, for occasional but on-going pleasures. Box 7249.

INTERESTING and active male friend 48+, in Avon/Herefordshire/Wiltshire areas, sought by lively woman. Box 7259.

INTESTASY LOOMING! Where's Viragoesque Damsel assertive enough to remotivate Guruvintage 'would be' into bestowing £50,000 into forward-looking enterprise? Anything considered (except inertia-promoting parasites' paradise). Box 7262.

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MID-THIRTIES male teacher obsessed by travel, talk, books and people, wishes to share same with good-natured, mature woman looking for new relationships. Box 7169.

NORTHERN LADY, socialist, young 39, needs well-educated and affectionate guy, must be unattached and home loving, preferably non-smoker. Box 7203.

PHILOSOPHICAL WRITER (m. 48), needing several years solitude, seeks creative woman, pursuing her own work, to share the solitude. I enjoy Dostoevsky, Wagner, Lao-Tse, Jung. Box 7266.

PHOTOGRAPHY TUTOR, 50s, would like to share life with younger female friend. Inclinations include cinema, symphonies, self-development and the creation of a child. Box 7176.

RETIRED CRAFTS lecturer, non-smoker, seeks attractive, amiable, artistic woman, sharing home adventures. Possible future abroad. Interests: anthropology, pottery, languages, music, animals; left-wing, humanist individualism. Box 7268.

ROBERT (29), hibernating during winter months, would like to hear from unconventional female. Interests: live music, travel. West Midlands. Box 7225.

SINGLE MOTHER, young 40, minimal means, Leeds-Manchester line, enjoys arts, people, countryside, hopes to contact lively-minded, companionable male with sense of humour. Box 7223.

SOCIALIST WIDOW, trained teacher, conservationist, smokes and drinks, no car, wants friendship 50+ male. Lovely home Bucks. Five offspring visit. Dogs, cats, geese. Box 7255.

SOCIOLOGY GRADUATE, 43, African interests, seeks neatly dressed, non-smoking man, for committed relationship in London. Non-pub goer, likes conversation, walking, cinema, philosophy. Box 7254.

SINGLE, PROFESSIONAL lady (29), Nigerian, invites reply from intelligent male, who is interested in forming genuine relationship, with slim, attractive graduate with sense of humour. Box 7222.

SLIM, ATTRACTIVE professional woman (mid 40s), separated, sensitive, sensual and outgoing. Enjoys cultural pursuits (music, theatre, cinema), seeks kindred spirit, preferably Jewish, in London area. Box 7250.

SOMNOLESCENT WRITER, 27, desirable, intelligent, etc., socialist no longer corrupted by beautiful rich heiress, needs awakening correspondent to inspire his writing, photography, TV filming in Japan, and to compensate for lazy friends. You? Box 7267.

TINY, GENTLE, quiet, motherly, single woman (unmarried mum of grown-up daughter), Yorkshire native, now inhabiting trendy NW6, seeks kind, intelligent, unattached man, for serious relationship, yes serious. Box 7177.

TRIM, ATTRACTIVE lady, 46, friendly, natural, socially aware, looking for intelligent man, who is free. Play it by ear? Box 7228.

UNIVERSITY LECTURER, Glasgow based, PhD, 29, stimulating company, Oxbridge background, needs a lady for meaningful relationship, perhaps marriage. Box 7273.

WITTY SAGITTARIAN woman (39), creative and caring teacher, with 1967 Ford Anglia to support, wants to meet a nice bloke, share theatre interests? Bristol. Box 7251.

WOMAN, 38, independent, wishes to meet a man seeking similar goals: a committed relationship, open to the possibility of having and/or raising children; a creative, responsible way of life. I am essentially a quiet person and have a wide range of interests – the most important are poetry, feminism and nonviolence, the psychology of Jung. I enjoy walking, cinema and theatre, music, reading. Replies in good faith only, please. London. Box 7184.

WORKAHOLIC, EXPLOSIVE professional, 35, considering reform but often abroad, seeks chic and similarly intelligent, sparkling, overachiever (o.n.o.) female, for enjoyable and possibly serious interaction. London. Box 7272.

WRITER, PhD, mature, kind, understanding and very experienced, left outlook, expert massage, would like to meet similar loving lady. Flat Central London, villa South France. Box 7253.

YORKSHIREMAN, 34, realist, seeks intelligent, independent minded female. Motive discussion, occasional outings, no hidden extras. Must appreciate country, need for conservation. Financial status irrelevant. Box 7256.

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Theatre

NATIONAL THEATRE 01-928 2252. Olivier (open stage) 'Jean Seberg', 'The Rivals'. Lyttelton (proscenium stage) 'Cinderella'. Cottesloe (small auditorium) Market Theatre Company from Johannesburg visiting NT in 'Master Harold and the Boys', 'Antigone'. See daily press for dates and times or ring recorded information 01-928 2256.

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